

# TO THE READER

**K**INDLY use this book very carefully. If the book is disfigured or marked or written on while in your possession the book will have to be replaced by a new copy or paid for. In case the book be a volume of set of which single volumes are not available the price of the whole set will be realized.

AMARSINGH COLLEGE  
Library

Class No.....176.....

Book No.....B58S.....

Acc. No.....6119.....

Unack. (Vermont)

~~AM 10/12~~



Unack.





Com-08  
A-38

(photography)

# Sex Education

*A Guide for Parents, Teachers  
and Youth Leaders*

by

Cyril Bibby

M.A., M.Sc., F.L.S.

*Education Officer to the Central Council  
for Health Education; sometime Scholar  
of Queens' College, Cambridge*

London

Macmillan & Co. Ltd

1944

Students sec.

acc 6119

Rn7/81-

29.7.46

COPYRIGHT

PRINTED IN GREAT BRITAIN  
BY R. & R. CLARK, LIMITED, EDINBURGH



## Preface

I cannot praise a fugitive and cloister'd vertue, unexercis'd  
and unbreath'd, that never sallies out and sees her adversary,  
but slinks out of the race, where that immortall garland is  
to be run for, not without dust and heat.

JOHN MILTON

ABOUT the need for a book of this nature at the present time there can be no doubt. Everywhere people are talking about sex education, and everywhere they are seeking guidance. About my qualifications to write it there is less certainty. It may perhaps be counted in my favour that I come into each of the three categories mentioned in the sub-title and during the last few years have had a good deal of experience in this field, but more than that cannot be said. The fact is that so little attention has been devoted in Great Britain to sex education that there is no one who can write with real authority. I have undertaken the task simply because it is one that must be tackled, and so far no better qualified person has done so.

So many people have helped, albeit unconsciously, in the preparation of the book that it is impossible to thank them all individually. They include the authors of all the books mentioned in the bibliography and of others too. They include also those thousands of people — school children, members of youth organisations, teachers, parents, youth leaders, biologists, medical practitioners, educational administrators, members of local authority committees and so on — to whom I have lectured on sex or with whom I have discussed the problems of sex education. The children in particular have done more than they know to convince me that what difficulty there is in sex education lies in the mind of the adult and not in that of the child.

Some there are, however, who must be thanked by name.



## Sex Education

It is both a pleasure and a privilege to be able to express deep gratitude to His Grace the Archbishop of Canterbury, President of the Central Council for Health Education, to whose wide knowledge and deep wisdom I am especially indebted. In making this acknowledgment, it must be emphasised that neither Dr. Temple nor any other of the individuals here thanked bear any responsibility whatsoever for this book, and they must not be assumed to concur in all the views herein expressed. Then there are my colleagues — especially Miss Violet D. Swaisland who has given generously of the fruits of her great experience; Miss M. E. Bennett, Mrs. J. Davidson and Miss I. V. Evelyn, who criticised sections of the manuscript; and Miss Joan Allan who helped in many ways.

Deeper thanks than can be expressed are also owed to my parents, who provided the happy family life in which my most impressionable years were spent; and my wife, who has not only given criticism and advice at every stage of the writing, but has also naturally played a major part in determining my general attitude to the matters herein discussed.

I have been fortunate also in the kindness with which many other people have given me permission to quote from their documents and to draw on their experiences in sex education. For obvious reasons, the various incidents described and materials quoted are not identified in the text as to person or place; but apart from those within my own experience, they derive from the Misses W. M. Allen, M. L. Beer, R. E. Cutbush, Zoe Dawe, M. M. Dickie, M. Diggle, Gladys Fell, Anna Freud, E. M. Fryer, I. E. Helm, I. J. Ingham, Olive Morton, P. Redfern, M. B. Ross and A. I. S. Smith; the Mrs. L. Tarrant, Anne Proctor, Kathleen Strong and Claire Tamplin; Dr. I. Powell Heath; Messrs. R. W. Faint, G. W. Handforth, Maurice Harrison, Maurice Holmes, W. G. Humphrey, W. T. Hutchins, Douglas Jackson, F. J. May, Henry Spink,



## Preface

A. G. A. Stephen and O. E. P. Wyatt; Prof. C. W. Valentine; and others who have preferred to remain anonymous.

My gratitude is due also to Mr. L. J. F. Brimble, who encouraged me to write the book and undertook its editing.

There will, no doubt, be many readers who will disagree with some of my proposals, and many who have made experiments in sex education along other lines. If they would be so good as to transmit their views and experiences to me I should be very grateful.

One other point. It should perhaps be explained that the absence of an index is a result not of oversight but of deliberate intent. The table of contents provides a résumé of each chapter and should make it quite easy for readers to find their way about the book; but this is a subject which it is particularly important should be seen as a whole, and I have no desire to facilitate matters for any who might wish to look up points in isolation.

Finally, it must be made clear that the Central Council for Health Education is in no way committed to the views expressed in this book.

CYRIL BIBBY

WELWYN GARDEN CITY

*May 1944*





# Contents

	PAGE
PREFACE . . . . .	V

## CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTORY : THE PROBLEMS POSED . . . . .	I
Public opinion. Our aims. Aspects of sex education. Age of instruction. Whose responsibility? Problems awaiting solution.	

## CHAPTER TWO

THE SOCIAL SETTING . . . . .	15
Social forces involved. Civilised sexuality. Marriage. Divorce. Extra-marital relations. Family planning. Nudity. Sexual aberrations. The venereal diseases. Immediate possibilities.	

## CHAPTER THREE

THE PARENT'S PART . . . . .	35
H. P. Importance of early years. Primitive functions. Infantile masturbation. Nudity. Sexuality in children. Precocious stimulation. Early questions. The new baby. Pre-puberty. Menstruation. Seminal emission. Masturbation. Adolescent romances. About to marry. Children as individuals. The home atmosphere.	

## CHAPTER FOUR

THE SCHOOL CURRICULUM . . . . .	56
The place of sex education. Nursery and Infant Schools. The Junior School. The Secondary School. Biology. Physiology and hygiene. The venereal diseases. Visiting lecturers. Domestic science and homecraft. Physical education. Mixed schools. History. Geography. Civics and economics. English. Religious instruction. Mathematics. Outside the classroom. Need for further study.	

# Sex Education

## CHAPTER FIVE

	PAGE
SEX PROBLEMS IN THE SCHOOL . . . . .	93
Importance of school atmosphere. Sexual notes. Sexual conversation. Sexual drawings. Nude photographs. Obscene journals. Nudity. Boy-and-girl romances. Sexual experimentation. Masturbation. Homosexuality. 'Crushes' and hero-worship. Mixed schools. Inspiration in the school.	

## CHAPTER SIX

IN THE SERVICE OF YOUTH . . . . .	118
The nature of adolescence. Need for sympathy. Aggressiveness. Physical growth. Endocrine changes. Menstruation. Seminal emission. Masturbation. Petting. Sublimation. Sex instruction in the club. Youth Colleges. The club programme. Mixed clubs.	

## CHAPTER SEVEN

IN SEARCH OF KNOWLEDGE . . . . .	139
Answering questions. Questions in the home (bodily structure ; origin of babies ; the child's vocabulary ; the father's role ; the biological approach). Questions in the classroom (immature phrasing ; myths and fables ; mating, pregnancy and birth ; heredity and multiple births ; menstruation and seminal emission ; age of parenthood ; pathological interests ; the venereal diseases ; emotional understanding ; social and moral aspects ; family planning ; importance of sensitivity). Questions in the club (emotional maturing ; menstruation ; the hymen and foreskin ; masturbation ; pregnancy and birth ; heredity and multiple births ; hygiene of marriage ; family planning ; social and moral aspects ; the venereal diseases ; journalistic inspiration ; linguistic ignorance). Not knowledge only.	

## CHAPTER EIGHT

EDUCATING THE EDUCATORS . . . . .	195
Urgency of need. Self-preparation. Necessary qualifications. Parents. Teachers. Specialist teachers. Head teachers. Youth leaders. Welfare workers. Clergymen. Medical practitioners. Nurses and health visitors. School doctors and nurses. The key workers.	



# Contents

## APPENDICES

	PAGE
I. TENTATIVE SCHEME FOR SEX EDUCATION . . . . .	215
The suckling. The infant. The toddler. The school-beginner. The pre-adolescent. The younger adolescent. The older adolescent. Courtship. Marriage. Parenthood.	
II. SUGGESTIONS FOR PRACTICAL ACTIVITIES . . . . .	224
Care and breeding of animals. Examination of microscopic preparations. Dissection of animals, including mammals. Examination of embryos. Manual activities. Numerical observations and experiments. Excursions and visits. Indi- vidual and group projects. Discussions and debates. Films.	
III. SOURCES OF MATERIAL AND ADVICE . . . . .	227
A—The Central Council for Health Education. B—Other bodies in Great Britain. C—British Commonwealth. D— United States of America.	
IV. SPECIMEN CIRCULARS . . . . .	231
A. Before reaching human reproduction in the school biology course. B. After dealing with human reproduction in the school biology course. C. Before a parents' meeting and talks by visiting lecturers. D. Before talks by visiting lecturers. E. Before boys come to boarding school.	
V. SPECIMEN LECTURES . . . . .	236
A. First talk to older adolescents and young adults. B1. Second talk to ditto (young men only). B2. Second talk to ditto (young women only). C. Third talk to ditto. D. Talk to parents of pupils.	
VI. GUIDE TO FURTHER READING . . . . .	273
1. Educational methods. 2. Biology. 3. Pathology and aberrations. 4. Sociology and ethics. 5. Marriage hygiene and family planning. 6. The child. 7. The adolescent. 8. The adult. 9. For children and younger adolescents. 10. For older adolescents and young adults. 11. General and miscellaneous.	





## Chapter One

# Introductory : The Problems Posed

Sex education is now understood to mean all educational measures which in any way may help young people prepare to meet the problems of life that have their centre in the sex instinct and incidentally come in some form into the experience of every normal human being.

M. A. BIGELOW

### PUBLIC OPINION

THERE has been of recent years a radical and widespread change of public opinion on the question of sex education. The time has passed when it was necessary to state with some vehemence the case against sheer obscurantism. Probably there will remain with us for many years a few frightened adults who will continue to foster the cult of ignorance ; but an increasingly large section of the population is allowing the myths of the gooseberry bush and the stork to fade into oblivion. The few remaining reactionaries have for some time ceased seriously to count. What has been disturbing to the advocates of sex education has been the fact that opposition, or at the best slightly frowning neutrality, has been the attitude of many educationists of high repute. All teachers love their tilt at the Board of Education, and educational administrators have long been considered fair game for eager reformers ; but it has been impossible merely to ignore the attitude of a Government department, or to brush aside with contempt the considered opinions of eminent educators.

Men and women of goodwill had doubts about sex education, and often those doubts were understandable. Eager sex educationists, stepping in where their elders (and some-



## Sex Education

times betters) feared to tread, were responsible for much of this dubiety. In their very proper enthusiasm for an excellent cause, they tended to alienate more orthodox opinion. The perhaps inevitable result of their determination to bring sex into its place in the educational picture was to paint a canvas on which it loomed over-large. In their rightful insistence that children should not remain in black ignorance, they tended sometimes to overload them with information beyond the bounds of their curiosity, intellectual ability or emotional understanding. Such is the fate of most sectarian enthusiasts — to drive their opponents into deeper opposition.

But now things are changing. Parents are beginning to see that in this field, as in others, honesty is the best policy ; teachers and youth leaders are realising that they also have a responsibility in the matter and are increasingly showing willingness to shoulder it. One education authority after another is changing its attitude from opposition to benevolent neutrality, and from benevolent neutrality to enthusiasm. And now the Board of Education, by the publication of its recent pamphlet,<sup>1</sup> has recognised that sex education has come to stay and should receive the welcome that is its due. Everywhere people are pressing for action.

The fear that parents might object to their children receiving sex instruction in school is a bogy that has been enormously magnified. In fact, parents are overwhelmingly grateful when the teachers offer to do something about the sex education of their children. Some schools and some education authorities circularise the parents of pupils and give them the opportunity of withdrawal and, although the wisdom of this procedure is open to question, the resulting figures are quite conclusive. A girls' grammar school in Surrey with 500 pupils had 4 withdrawals, a similar school

<sup>1</sup> Board of Education. Educational Pamphlet No. 119. *Sex Education in Schools and Youth Organisations*. H.M. Stationery Office (1943), 6d. net.



## Introductory : The Problems Posed

in Dorset had 2 out of 650, one in Kent not a single withdrawal out of 550. A boys' grammar school in Lancashire has had not one withdrawal over several years ; while one in Greater London, framing its circular in such a way as to require positive consent, received it (together with a financial contribution towards the expenses of the visiting lecturer) from the parents of as many as 380 out of 470 pupils. The position is much the same in the senior schools. An urban district in Lancashire met with 21 withdrawals out of 936 pupils, and a neighbouring county borough with only 15 out of 2300. In other schools and other areas it is felt best to proceed without the formality of circularisation ; but scarcely ever is there any appreciable objection. The fact is that parents are extremely glad when the schools take on this work, and deeply grateful to them for doing so. So much is this the case that some authorities which began by asking the parents' permission, have now ceased to do so, since the number withholding it is so negligible.

There has been in the past a certain doubt expressed by the teaching profession — a doubt with two main elements. The first was that of desirability. More than one professional organisation of teachers had shown considerable reluctance to take up the ' controversial ' matter of sex education ; but it is scarcely a matter of controversy any longer, at least in so far as the main question is concerned. During the last few years, meetings of teachers throughout the country have demonstrated this change of opinion, and it is now filtering upward and beginning to produce its effects in official circles. In principle the great body of teachers is now in favour of sex education.<sup>1</sup>

Lingering doubts, however, still remain on the other score. Having had thrust upon them in recent years multifarious tasks outside their main one of education,

<sup>1</sup> National Union of Teachers. *Sex Teaching in Schools*. Statement by N.U.T. Executive Committee (1944) obtainable from Hamilton House, London, W.C.1.



## Sex Education

teachers are profoundly, and quite understandably, suspicious of any attempt to lay yet another burden on their shoulders. But even while recognising and insisting upon parental responsibility for some aspects of sex education, teachers are on the whole now willing to agree that much remains to be done in the school also.

So far as the attitude of the pupils themselves is concerned, the comment of a sixth-form girl from a Northumberland grammar school is fairly typical of the reaction of the older ones among them :

Whilst endeavouring to recall my first reactions to this innovation [she writes], I realised that my feelings were not of an astonished — still less a shocked nature at all. In fact the only mental comment of mine I can recall is “ About time, too.” In my opinion the whole danger about this matter of sex is, concealing it. If you put a thing on a mantelpiece and tell your little boy he may play with anything else in the room, but not that, you may be sure the moment you are out of sight he will make some attempt to reach it, and will either fall in the fire or off his chair in doing so. The important thing is that the child will be blamed — not the parent ; and in any case the forbidden article is probably quite harmless, treated properly. The parallel is obvious ; sex has been, in general, concealed from us — set apart as a thing untouchable.

The younger children just do not usually give the matter any special thought, but accept such lessons as perfectly normal and natural — although one young London pupil was heard to make the very wise comment, “ When you come to think of it, there’s nothing strange about it ! ”

In the voluntary organisations for children and adolescents, the swing of opinion has been equally marked. Not many years ago, only a few particularly progressive movements, such as the Woodcraft Folk, included sex education as a normal part of their work and attempted to remedy the deficiencies of home and school. But latterly the larger organisations of Boy Scouts and Girl Guides, of Boys’ Brigade and Boys’ and Girls’ Clubs, have also seen their



## Introductory : The Problems Posed

responsibility and begun to seize their opportunity ; while the official and semi-official pre-service and first-aid movements are also swinging into line. In the youth movements the difficulty now is not to persuade leaders of the desirability of sex education ; it is to meet adequately the enormous demand for it.

The Churches, too, are moving. In the Anglican and Free Churches there has been for years an enlightened minority which has done excellent work in this field, and the minority bids fair to become a majority. Among Jews, the need for sex education has been widely recognised for a long time, and has been met to a considerable extent. And in the Roman Catholic Church, opposition is by no means so uncompromising as it has been, and many influential priests and laymen are ready enough to co-operate in this task.<sup>1</sup> It seems, in fact, that so long as there is recognition of, and toleration for, the sincerely held views of the various denominations, obstacles will not be placed by them in the way of sex education.

The general public, educational and medical administrators, churches and social organisations, teachers and youth leaders, parents and pupils — all are ready to go ahead.

It seems likely that the pioneer battle against obscurantism is now over. No longer is it necessary to press the claims of sex education in language more vigorous than profound. Now is the need for careful study of the many educational issues involved.

### OUR AIMS

The first issue is that of objective. What are the aims of sex education, and what are its possibilities ? To serve as a basis for useful action, an objective must be both desirable and attainable, and this cannot be said of some aims that have been propounded.

<sup>1</sup> Catholic Archbishops and Bishops of England and Wales. *Statement on Sex Education*. Westminster Cathedral Chronicle. May 1944.



## Sex Education

There are those who use 'sex education' as an euphemism for dilation on the horrors of venereal disease, and hope to frighten young people into 'goodness'; just as there are others whose aim is to produce 'morality' by threats of fire and brimstone. But with such 'goodness' and such 'morality' the educationist can have no truck. A morality that is worthy of the name is not to be based on fear, whether it be fear of disease in this world or of damnation in the next. Such aims fail on the test of desirability.

Other aims, desirable enough in themselves, fail on the score of feasibility. To expect by sex education alone to wipe out prostitution and casual promiscuity, to make all marriages successful and all divorces disappear, to abolish adultery and prevent all fornication, is to be hopelessly unrealistic. Many and deep-seated are the sexual ills of society, and education unaided will not eradicate them. Economic and political changes and a new social and spiritual vision are needed too.

There is, however, no need for despondency; for even within these socially imposed limitations, sex education can do a great deal. An aim that is both desirable and practicable is that our citizens should grow up learning the truth and not petty lies, that their emotional attitude to sex should be a healthy and not a distorted one, and that their code of sexual morals should be built up on a basis of clear-headed and warm-hearted contemplation of all the issues involved.

### ASPECTS OF SEX EDUCATION

It will be worth while to consider for a moment the different aspects of sex education, and to attempt to assess their relative importance. The first and most obvious aspect is that of the imparting of information. The extent and technique of this factual instruction will be considered later, but it is immediately clear that here is the very foundation stone of sex education. It is part of the inalienable



## Introductory : The Problems Posed

intellectual heritage of children that they be told the truth. With it, they may not in all cases act wisely ; but without it, they have no standard of judgment.

Yet sex education is more than mere imparting of information. Knowledge of the truth is very rarely harmful and usually beneficial, so that any person who helps to clear away the vast mountain of ignorance on this subject may feel that some good has been done. But a study of ancient or contemporary history, or even a superficial knowledge of the lives of one's acquaintances, will rapidly dispel any illusion that there is necessarily a close correlation between the extent of an individual's knowledge and the excellence of his actions. Something more is needed.

Factual information is indispensable, but it is also necessary to interpret for the pupils the relationship between the facts of human anatomy and physiology and the conventions of human society.

The teaching of biology (in its usual unduly limited form) will make clear to our children that the human sex organs are essentially similar to those of other mammals. And if sex education were to stop there, it would be logical for a child to deduce that the sexual behaviour of a healthy young human should be not very different from that of a healthy young rabbit. But since we do not in fact wish to adopt the rabbit as the model for our sexual behaviour, our education must break these narrow bounds. It must, at the appropriate stages, deal also with those respects in which humans *differ* from the other mammals, and in particular with the consequences of the unique development of our nervous system and of our peculiar sociability. This may be called ' sociology ', or it may be regarded as part of biology and called ' human ecology ' — but whatever the label, the content is of the greatest importance.

But even an understanding of the origin of certain social conventions will not of itself ensure the living of a fine sex life. Our children must be inspired with a feeling of the



## Sex Education

excellence of sex and of its immense potentialities. Our young people, if they are to deny themselves the immediate sensual pleasures with which our bodies can so richly provide us, must see some reason for such a sacrifice. If they are to be asked to wait, they must feel that they have a future, and a future that is worth waiting for. If society is to make demands, it must see to it that its members think sufficiently highly of it to be willing to accede to them. *Behaviour is dependent upon ideals and inspiration, as well as upon knowledge and intellectual understanding.*

### AGE OF INSTRUCTION

A matter that needs very careful consideration is that of the age of instruction. Sometimes at meetings the question is posed directly : " At what age should sex education take place ? " ; but this is quite clearly a query to which there is no simple answer. No one age can be prescribed for sex education, any more than it can for any other aspect of health education or character training. Sex education should surely be a continuous process from the cradle to the grave, and the question should really be re-phrased to read : " What aspects of sex education are particularly appropriate to different ages ? " In what follows, this perfectly valid question will be partially answered. But it is perhaps worth while to suggest in the meantime that what happens in the first few years of life is of fundamental importance in the development of a healthy attitude to sex, and that the central physiological facts should be well understood by all children before the onset of adolescence.

There are three main reasons for this proposal that the factual instruction should be virtually completed in the pre-adolescent stage. The most obvious is that adolescence is a period with peculiar problems, often sexual in origin, which cause a great deal of worry to young people ; and that if the difficulties of the period are to be eased, children must know



## Introductory : The Problems Posed

in advance what changes to expect in themselves after puberty has supervened.

No less important is the fact that if factual instruction is left until the age of fourteen or fifteen, most modern boys and girls will already have picked it up from other sources. But it will be garbled accounts that they have heard, and the facts — essentially clean in themselves — will have been coated with some of the slime of the gutter-channels through which they have been passed. If sex is to be accepted as a normal and healthy thing, knowledge of it must at all stages be imparted in a normal and healthy manner. And that means that street-corner and playground companions must not be given a year or two's start over parents and teachers.

Perhaps, however, the most compelling argument for early instruction is the fact that experience has shown it then to be the more readily and naturally accepted by the children themselves. By the age of fourteen or fifteen, young people are already developing emotional attitudes to sex, and this introduces difficulties in the way of instruction. But before adolescence, the facts of sex and reproduction are accepted — and this is the testimony of all who have wide experience — in a completely matter-of-fact manner, with not a trace of self-consciousness or embarrassment.

Inevitably there are certain aspects of sex education quite unsuited to such children and quite incapable of being appreciated by them. Some matters are best dealt with in early adolescence, others in later adolescence ; some before marriage, others after marriage ; some before the attainment of parenthood, others after. What is needed is really careful and detailed consideration of the best age for each particular part of sex education.

### WHOSE RESPONSIBILITY ?

A question of prime importance is this — who is to impart to the child this central core of knowledge, this understanding



## Sex Education

of human reproductive physiology, its emotional concomitants and its social implications? The parent or clergyman or doctor or youth leader or teacher? Not infrequently, when addressing meetings of teachers on the subject of sex education, the speaker is met by the challenge: "But surely this is the parents' responsibility?" At meetings of parents, the form of the challenge varies. It is: "Why were we not given instruction when we were at school, to fit us to carry out this job?" One category of adults rejects the job on the grounds that it is the responsibility of another category; the other cannot undertake it for lack of proper training by the first. Somewhere this circle, vicious in its results, must be broken.

Considering this country to-day, and not some future Utopia, there can be little disputing that the majority of parents are not competent to give much of the instruction. Even where the desire exists, the parent is often frustrated by the simple problem of vocabulary. It is often not realised by well-educated people, and perhaps especially by teachers, who by the very nature of their vocation have acquired an exceptionally comprehensive vocabulary, what a difficult matter this is. Imagine the predicament of the parent who honestly wishes to answer a child's queries: Where does a baby come from?, How does it grow?, What's the use of a father?, and so on — and who does not know the simple anatomical terms, *penis*, *vagina*, etc. How can the questions be answered? The majority of parents know only the folk-terms for the sexual organs and the sexual processes, and most of the relevant words have over the last few centuries sunk in the social scale until they have now reached the gutter, and have even in some cases become positively obscene. Both parents and children need, therefore, alternative words and phrases which they may use without hesitation in public.

A teacher with great experience in this field writes that in her biology course



## Introductory : The Problems Posed

each example introduces a new idea, and at each stage we learn a new scientific term. This I consider to be important ; by the time we get to reproduction in human beings the children have some appreciation of the technique of fertilisation and some knowledge of the terms to use, which are scientific ones that have neither lewd nor rude associations.

That parents themselves are aware of the difficulty is evident from the statement of a London schoolgirl whose teacher had included lessons on human reproduction in her hygiene course :

My opinion is [she writes], I think the lessons are very useful. It is right for us to know about the lessons. You taught us about the sex organs and did not make us feel awkward. You were very kind letting us ask questions that were hard and you had to think of what it was. My mother said it was all right for Miss —— as she knows the scientific names and that she can tell us better than she can.

Muddled in phrasing perhaps — yet clear enough in meaning.

Another argument against the assumption that all sex education can be carried out by the parent, is the fact that many children prefer to ask questions of any adult *except* their own parents. This is to some extent (but not entirely) a reflection on the parents concerned ; but it is a fact that must be reckoned with. Describing a talk by the woman school medical officer, a Northumberland schoolgirl commented :

She had an unenviable duty and everyone could not speak too highly of her and the way she carried it out. Someone remarked, "I would rather talk to her than to my mother." Praise indeed for the doctor, but what for the mother ?

A new generation of parents, better educated, with fewer inhibitions and more biological knowledge, may undertake the task with success. But at present to 'leave it to the parents' is merely to shirk the job. Teachers must help too.

It is easy to understand that many religious bodies will



## Sex Education

wish sex instruction to be given by a clergyman. But even leaving aside for the moment that large body of citizens who have no real attachment to any Church, there are serious objections to the quite common practice of utilising confirmation classes for this purpose. Apart from the fact that many clergymen are not skilled teachers, there is the further objection that such a course may tend to arouse or intensify emotional feelings about sex. There is every reason why churches should give to their members their views on matters pertaining to sex, especially on the ethical side, but they are not the ideal vehicles for fundamental instruction.

There is quite a strong body of opinion in favour of sex instruction being given by a medical man or woman. No doubt the doctor has an important part to play in individual difficult cases, especially if qualified as a psychiatrist. But in general, just as teachers (even those with a very good knowledge of human physiology and pathology) have not the necessary clinical experience to qualify them as doctors, so doctors (even those with a good knowledge of educational theory) have not the pedagogic experience to qualify them as teachers. There is no escaping the conclusion that sex education is very largely the task of the educational specialist — the teacher.

Probably a many-sided approach to the problem will be more fruitful than a frontal attack from any one aspect. The teacher must recognise the inadequacy of most parents in this matter and must undertake a fair share — and for some years to come even more than a fair share — of the responsibility. On the other hand, without waiting for a new generation to arise, the parents of to-day must do as well as they can despite their undoubted handicaps. Youth leaders must undertake their share of the task, and so must religious and social workers and medical practitioners. Sterile disputation about the precise allocation of degrees of responsibility must give way to serious preparation for getting on with the



## Introductory : The Problems Posed

job in hand and to close collaboration between all who have a part to play.

### PROBLEMS AWAITING SOLUTION

But before the job is started, before even we draw up our blue-print for it, the ground must be surveyed. What is this sex about which we are so concerned ? Has it any part to play in human life other than that of procreation ? And what are to be our standards of sexual behaviour — what, indeed, have been the standards in other places and other times ? Can we set up absolute moral codes valid for all time, or must they be modified to meet changing social conditions ? Only when we know where we stand in these matters, can we begin to make our plans.

These questions settled, the problems facing the parent are mainly threefold. First is that of the home environment — what sort of relations between mother and father, between parent and child, between brother and sister, are most conducive to the development of healthy attitudes to sex ? Then there is that perennial problem, how to answer so-called 'awkward' questions (made awkward, incidentally, mainly by the attitude of the parents themselves). Finally, how are parents to deal with their offsprings' manifestations of sexuality, from the infant's first fondling of its sex organs to the young adult's marriage day ? These are items of the greatest import and will warrant the closest attention.

From the home the child goes to school, and the teacher comes into the picture. What place is he to occupy : the centre or some obscure corner ? And the place decided, what is he to do in it ? How is information to be imparted, and what else remains when this instructional job has been completed ? These are matters which have been discussed time and again, but they will bear much discussion yet.

As our young citizens grow, the youth leader and welfare worker emerge into importance. One problem above all



## Sex Education

others stands out for them : What is the nature of adolescence ? And what are its special difficulties and how may they be eased ? Here is material enough for a book of its own, and for many books. But even in one chapter a first tentative reply may be hazarded.

Whoever the educator may be, whether teacher or parent or youth leader or other, he will need to look at the whole field of sex education for a while through the other end of the glass — What is it that children and adolescents *want* to know and upon what problems do they *seek* guidance ? In what language are they likely to speak, and to what extent are they able to express themselves ?

The field surveyed in this way, we are able to complete our plans. What qualifications does the sex educationist require, and what is to be our programme of action ? And finally, what help can be given to those starting off in this field ?

Many of these questions are touched on in succeeding chapters : probably to none is a complete answer given, but to all must educationists devote their closest attention.

## Chapter Two

# The Social Setting

The educational problem must never be separated from the social problem. It is all part of the general enterprise of civilisation in the provision of a truly civilised society.

ARCHBISHOP TEMPLE

### SOCIAL FORCES INVOLVED

It is well for those who are interested in sex education to appreciate the nature and the magnitude of the social forces involved. People's attitudes to sex, like their attitudes to any other aspect of human life, do not crystallise in isolation, but are shaped and impregnated by the views of their fellow citizens, and by the whole structure of the society in which they live. That is why some enthusiasts for sex education live in a fool's paradise. Imagining that it is possible in a few talks to school children to overcome the influence of years of living in a society with distorted attitudes to sex, they are due for disillusion. The best results will follow from sex education only when the whole of our society is remodelled, and our children grow up from the earliest days surrounded by adults who feel that sex is an excellent and joyous thing in which man and woman join as equal partners, sharing benefits and responsibilities alike. Meanwhile, our scheme of sex education must not be drawn up *in vacuo*, as if sex attitudes and sex behaviour were things fixed and immutable. If it is to be really potent, it must be sex education for a particular social setting.

### CIVILISED SEXUALITY

It is important to realise that many of our sex troubles are a direct result of our civilisation. The most primitive



## Sex Education

sexual life is a purely physical and largely reflex one — what Stekel called “ an imperative of the spinal cord ”. Civilised man has built up sex into a much finer thing, involving all sorts of intellectual and emotional elements. The result is that to a certain extent “ the brain avenges itself against the spinal cord, in that by means of an immense superstructure of inhibitions it prevents the healthy sexual reflex from functioning ”. Certain shallow theorists deduce from this that we should ‘ be natural ’ and revert to primitive sexual behaviour. But we cannot, because it is more difficult to live a civilised life than a savage one, simply jettison all that is highest in us. We must start from the belief that this civilised superstructure is of the utmost value and must be not only retained but even developed. And if that means difficulties, we must face up to them and try to solve them in a way consistent with civilised excellence.

Sexual love, in the sense in which we use the phrase to-day, is a product of civilisation. Just as the primitive appetite for food, expressing itself in its crudest form as the mere gulping down of a newly killed prey, has evolved over the ages into the refined palate of the gourmet, so the primitive lust for sexual intercourse has blossomed into the fine flower of love. Margaret Mead has painted in her *Growing Up in New Guinea* a picture of the sordidness of sexual relations from which the elements of non-erotic friendship, of playfulness and tenderness are divorced. Among the Manus, a man’s ordinary feelings of tenderness and respect are owed to his sister, any playfulness and laughing familiarity belongs to his cross-cousin, his loyalty to his father, his solicitude to his children. There remains for his wife the simple physical act of copulation.

Unrelieved by romantic fictions or conventions of wooing, untouched by tenderness, unbulwarked by co-operativeness and good feeling as between partners, unhelped by playfulness, preliminary play or intimacy, sex is conceived as something bad, inherently shameful, something to be relegated to the darkness of night.



## The Social Setting

This is a description of marriage among the Manus of New Guinea. But of how many homes in Great Britain is it not also nearly true? Havelock Ellis, with his usual insight, was right when he proclaimed :

To the truly ideal marriage there go not only an erotic harmony, but a union of many-sided and ever-deepening non-erotic affection, a community of tastes and feelings and interests, a life in common, a probability of shared parenthood and often an economic union.

### MARRIAGE

It is useless for the sex educationist to attempt to build up ideal attitudes to marriage that are divorced from all reality. Those who see no intrinsic evil in sex may well feel that in a new Utopia the institution of marriage would have no place, that sex relations would be so governed by universal harmony that any contractual basis for living together would be quite unnecessary. But we are not living in an Utopia of perfect beings ; we are part of a world made up of imperfect people. We are not starting out to plan a new society from scratch ; we are faced with the much more difficult task of adapting one already in existence, with all its faults and failings.

If our sex education is to have relevance in existing conditions, it must take account of the fact that the Western World has for centuries been permeated by the Christian sexual ethic. This has not been an undilutedly beneficial influence, for although to-day many divines hold an elevated view of marriage, some of the earlier tendencies were quite degrading. St. Paul's view that " It is good for a man not to touch a woman. . . . But if they cannot contain, let them marry ; for it is better to marry than to burn ", is hardly calculated to present marriage as an excellent thing ; while his behest " Nevertheless to avoid fornication, let every man have his own wife and every woman have her own husband " seems to present marriage at its lowest, as a mere outlet for uncontrollable lust.



## Sex Education

A trace of this attitude, derived by the early Christians partly from the religious systems of the East, still persists to-day. It is not always explicit, but it is there, and becomes manifest in occasional unreasoned outbursts of prelates and politicians, who sometimes give the impression of quoting almost directly the words of Alcuin of York, written before ever William of Normandy set foot on these shores. "Since the time of King Aelfwold . . ." he wrote, "the land has been absolutely submerged under a flood of fornication, adultery and incest, so that the very semblance of modesty is entirely absent." Substitute the name of any recent monarch, and there is the gist of many a modern utterance.

It was only gradually in these islands that marriage came under clerical control. From the seventh to the tenth century the Church appears to have had little control over marriage, and although by the eleventh century it had become customary for a couple after marriage to receive the sacrament at Church, this was a voluntary act, and not a necessary part of the marriage ceremony. Not indeed until the sixteenth century was benediction made necessary to a valid marriage.

Along with the tightening of Church control over marriage went a change of attitude to the whole question of sex. The asceticism of the early Christian mystics, which was a sacrifice of sexual life voluntarily accepted in order that its force might be directed into the channels of refined spirituality, became degraded into a view of sex as in some way an evil thing in itself. It is only in comparatively recent times that churchmen have once again come to recognise that sexuality may have a value to humans apart from its purely reproductive function. This recognition is implicit in the assertion of the 1930 Lambeth Conference that "sex life is primarily a process of soul-education" — an assertion which (perhaps with some reservations about the precise significance to be attached to the word 'soul') would be accepted by most advanced thinkers to-day.



## The Social Setting

When considering sexual morals, it is well to remember that ideas of what behaviour is good and of what the relations should be between man and woman and between parent and child, have altered a good deal during our history. The idea that our earliest mating system was one of 'group marriage' in which all the males and all the females of the group belonged to each other indiscriminately, has had a good deal of doubt cast upon it; and indeed many of the rather more bizarre mating systems which were described in bewildering complexity by anthropologists of the last century, have been shown to be misinterpretations of kinship terminology. But sufficient exact knowledge remains to make it quite clear that human communities have, at different times and in different places, held very different attitudes not only to marriage, but also to pre- and extra-marital intercourse, to promiscuity and prostitution, to masturbation and homosexuality, to contraception and abortion — indeed to all aspects of sex and sexual behaviour. As societies have changed economically, politically, socially, and in religion, so they have changed in their sexual customs. And a catholic knowledge of the attitudes of other places and other times may help the citizen of this country to-day to a more balanced appreciation of the issues involved.

For those of our fellows who accept the Church's teaching in its entirety, no questions will arise about the validity of the marriage institution. But increasingly young people are demanding some other justification for it, and those concerned with sex education must either find the justification or honestly admit that they know of none. In fact, however, the search is not a very difficult one.

No society is known of which some form of marriage has not been a feature. There have been periods, as in the few years succeeding the Soviet Revolution in Russia, in which there has been a tendency for the care of children to become the concern of the State rather than of the parents. But there, as always in the long run, the realisation that a child



## Sex Education

needs more than food and shelter and that its emotional wants can be adequately met only by its parents, has put the family back in its place as the keystone of society. If a couple intend to have children, then they owe it to those children to set up a permanent home which will provide the stable background against which healthy emotional development can proceed.

It is, nevertheless, sometimes argued that a couple of lovers could live permanently together without entering upon any legal contract. But so might a couple of business men trade together without legal contract ; yet this fact is not normally used as an argument for the abolition of contractual law. The fact is that in a highly complex society such as ours, it is necessary, in order to avoid unfairness to child or adult, that some record be kept of those who set up in family life together, and the marriage ceremony provides that record.

There is, moreover, another point to be considered. The relation between man and woman can be much more than a mere matter of sexual intercourse. It must be admitted that sex is part of life, and a very important part, but it is only *part*. A happily married couple rejoice in all sorts of other shared activities, including the daily trivia of domestic life. And it is a fact that most couples who have sexual relations without marriage lose all this, owing to the necessity for keeping their relationship clandestine. There are some who have a sufficient degree of economic, social and moral independence to set up their *ménage* quite openly, but usually the relationship is soiled and degraded by constant subterfuge and deceit.

## DIVORCE

Idealistic young people will very naturally reply that it is immoral for a couple who no longer love each other to remain bound together and be deprived of a second opportunity to make good, and it certainly strengthens the social



## The Social Setting

argument for marriage if the possibility of terminating unsuccessful unions is not ruled out.

Since the passage of the 1937 Matrimonial Causes Bill through the stormy seas of Parliament, adultery has lost its position as the unique valid cause for divorce. Cruelty, habitual drunkenness, incurable insanity, life imprisonment and desertion for three years have been added, and except in those hard cases for which no law can be expected explicitly to provide, an injured party has reasonable hopes of obtaining freedom to remarry. But there will be many who feel that a couple who have not reached such straits, and who may indeed retain complete respect for each other, should be able to dissolve their contract by mutual consent, if after careful consideration they have decided that their marriage will not be a success. This is not the place to debate such a question, but it is the place to assert that a radical programme of sex education will include matrimonial advice to couples *before* their marriages founder, as was the intention of the ill-fated Summary Jurisprudence (Domestic Procedure) Bill of 1935. Very often there lies behind a marriage failure a dismal history of sexual ignorance and maladjustment which in many cases could have been set right and the marriage made successful.

It is quite clear that any system of divorce must make all possible allowance for the physical and emotional well-being of all members of the family, and where there are offspring to a marriage, particularly careful thought is needed before the decision is reached to dissolve the union. It is the testimony of teachers, magistrates and social workers that a very high proportion of 'difficult' children come from broken homes. It is, moreover, significant that the Soviet Union, after a period in which divorce was extraordinarily easy to obtain, did decide in 1936 to tighten up the conditions a little. But whatever decision we come to in Great Britain, it is necessary to remember how deeply our whole way of thinking has been impregnated by the views of the Church,



## Sex Education

and therefore of the ancient eastern religious cults, and to endeavour to disentangle in our minds rational thought from unthinking prejudice.

### EXTRA-MARITAL RELATIONS

Until fairly recently, a major problem of those interested in the sexual well-being of society was that of prostitution. Whatever may be said of the religious origin of the practice (and it was partly the very fact of its place in alien temples that was responsible for that Hebraic vehemence against it which passed into early Christian thought), and however the theologian writing under the name of Aquinas may have defended it on the grounds that "prostitution in towns is like the sewer in a palace; take away the sewers and the palace becomes an impure and a stinking place", modern times have seen a complete revulsion against it, a recognition of its thoroughly degrading nature. Temporary disturbances such as war may cause a revival; but on the whole it is dying out in Britain, and a lowering of the marriage age and an improvement in marriage preparation should accelerate its death. The economic factor is naturally an important one. Low wages and poor conditions of labour encourage women to become prostitutes. The social factor is important too, in that a society which recognises man and woman as equals will recoil from the hiring by the one of the body of the other. It may, therefore, reasonably be anticipated that better education, better economics, better laws and a better social system will largely bring about the end of prostitution.

The commercialised sexual relation, however, is largely being replaced by the casual. The phoenix of prostitution dies, but arises anew from the flames as promiscuity. The fire has nevertheless brought about considerable purification. With whatever distaste one may view mere butterfly-flitting from flower to flower, and however one may regret its failure



## The Social Setting

to develop fine fruit, it is at least far preferable to squalid antics on the dunghill. A disservice is indeed done to the cause of sexual morality by those who fail to recognise any gradation in standards of behaviour, and lump together all types of pre-marital intercourse under the omnibus title of 'fornication'. Unmarried intercourse between a couple genuinely fond of each other is surely on a different plane from mere promiscuity, and promiscuity itself from prostitution.

The person who floats about from one partner to another no doubt achieves a certain physical satisfaction, but for humans there is more to sex than this. Such a person is missing what is finest in sexual love — that feeling of intimacy and of mutual trust which can scarcely develop except against a background of some permanence. Many young people are ready to appreciate this when it is pointed out to them; but as well as sex education, youth needs a reorientation of its whole way of thinking, it needs tasks which will be worthy of its restless energy, and it needs an adult society which will give it friendly encouragement instead of indiscriminate condemnation.

In Great Britain to-day the most widely divergent opinions on pre-marital intercourse are held. Some people, in violent (and easily comprehensible) rebellion against all the hypocrisy and mealy-mouthedness which surround them, deny to chastity any value whatsoever. Others, their views firmly determined by their religious beliefs, hold that any sort of sexual relation before marriage is a sin. But the great majority of our young citizens have not made up their minds. Recognising the unfairness of bringing an illegitimate child into the world (but also recognising that the risk of this happening can be considerably reduced by the practice of contraception), agreeing that a temporary liaison is no adequate substitute for the permanent relationship of marriage, many nevertheless feel that there are circumstances in which pre-marital relations may be permissible and even desirable. If they are to remain virgin until marriage, they must be



## Sex Education

given very good reasons to persuade them to do so.

War conditions naturally aggravate the problem. So long as we organise our society in such a way that once each generation millions of homes are broken up, millions of husbands and wives separated, and millions of young men and women debarred from any likelihood of early marriage, so long will such troubles be accentuated. But to a lesser degree they exist in peace-time too, and it is with the solution of this long-term problem that we are here more concerned. Naturally, to those who take the view that pre-marital chastity has no value, the problem does not exist. But many who are quite unimpressed by religious dogma may nevertheless feel that marriage is a richer and more intimate thing if the partners come to it virgin, and explore the delights of sex together (and it should be noted that the word 'partners' is in the plural — with the idea that the woman must be chaste but the man may 'sow his wild oats' there can be no sympathy).

Yet no amount of mere talk will of itself dam up the sexual urge of lusty youth. Far-reaching social changes are needed too, and the first among them is the removal of those all-too-many barriers to early marriage — insufficient wages, shortage of houses, opposition on the part of parents and of employers, and so on. Second (or perhaps co-prime) is the need to give young people the feeling that they have some future and there is something for which it is *worth while* to postpone their sexual satisfaction; that there is something that they can give to society, and which will give them an honoured place in it; some burning sense of social purpose such as in the years between the wars inspired the young builders of the Soviet Union.

## FAMILY PLANNING

It is a very significant fact that the 'birth control' clinics of yesterday are being replaced by the 'family planning'



## The Social Setting

clinics of to-day. Increasingly it is being realised that there is a positive aspect to family planning as well as the negative ; that advice is often needed by those who wish for children and have hitherto been unable to produce them, as well as by those who wish to know how to prevent conception. But from the point of view of its influence on sexual morality, it is the negative aspect that has produced the problems.

It is futile to pretend that the spread of knowledge of contraception makes no difference to questions of sexual behaviour. Despite all uncertainties and failures, the solid fact remains that with care it is possible, with a high degree of probability, to avoid the reproductive consequence of the sexual act. And since an act between two persons must be judged differently according as whether or not it involves a third, those who may be called upon to give sex guidance need to clarify their own views on the ethics of birth control.

Such views fall normally into one of three categories. There are some people who feel that so long as a new life is not created, the sexual relations of a couple are of no concern to anyone but themselves, and that contraceptive devices may therefore properly be used by persons both married and single. On the other hand, there are those whose religious views reject any sort of contraception under any sort of circumstances (although even the Roman Church allows advantage to be taken of the so-called ' safe period '). Between these two extremes is the view of an increasingly large number of people, that while it is certainly capable of abuse (for example, in mere selfish refusal to take on the responsibilities of parenthood for fear of some resulting diminution in self-indulgence), contraceptive technique may also be used to great advantage in avoiding an unduly rapid series of pregnancies, or in preventing conception altogether for some adequate reason. We do not refuse to teach people to write because a few will grow up to be forgers.

Although it is only in comparatively recent times that fairly reliable means of contraception have come within the



## Sex Education

reach of the great masses of the peoples of the more advanced countries, some form of family limitation is known from the very earliest times and in the most primitive societies. Infanticide and abortion were apparently cultural predecessors of contraception, and are both to be found to-day among primitive peoples and (the latter particularly) in our own society.

But while actual contraceptive methods tended in early times to be largely magical in nature, there are evidences of rational techniques. In many communities, people practise *coitus interruptus*, attempt to remove semen by post-coital bodily movements, and make some attempt at the delimitation of a 'safe period'. And some primitive methods show a remarkable foreshadowing of modern techniques. Tampons of rag or chopped grass are used by the Kasai tribes of Central Africa, of seaweed in Easter Island; while the Djuaka of Guiana use douches containing lemon juice, and the Sumatrans plugs containing tannic acid — both very effective spermicides. There even appears to be used in Guiana a primitive sheath, in the form of a large seed-pod, snipped off at one end and inserted in the vagina; while — although this is disputed by some authorities — it has been reported from Australia that surgical operations are carried out for contraceptive purposes.

It appears that in ancient Egypt suppositories of honey and gummy substances were used, and even a tampon of lint impregnated with honey and acacia tips — which latter may actually liberate lactic acid! The early Hebrews did not permit the male to practise contraception, but apparently the duty to multiply was not laid upon women, and female contraception was not, therefore, prohibited. Contraceptive medicine was placed by Soranos in the second century upon a rational footing, although it is unlikely that either in Greece or in Rome there was any wide dissemination of such knowledge. A good example of the effect of religious and social custom comes from China, where the duty of producing



## The Social Setting

offspring, summed up in Confucius's dictum that "There are three things which are unfilial but the most unfilial of these is to have no sons", acted as a severe discouragement to contraception. In both India and Japan, however, fairly rational methods have been practised for some time.

Islam sees no religious barrier to either contraception or early abortion, since according to its theology the foetus is not a human being with a soul until a fairly late stage of development. It is therefore not surprising that the texts of its physicians outline rational contraceptive methods and regard danger to the mother's health as an indication for their use. In medieval Christendom, on the other hand, there was general condemnation of both practices, and as is usual when open investigation becomes impossible or dangerous, contraceptive medicine went into a decline and magical recipes such as "spitting thrice in the mouth of a frog" achieved wide circulation.

The next century or two saw little change in Europe, but from Jeremy Bentham in 1797 onwards, English economists and social workers began to recommend birth control as a means of bringing about smaller families, and hence of reducing poverty. Many of their hopes were based on quite erroneous economic views, but at least the democratisation of contraceptive knowledge was begun. The trials of Annie Besant and Charles Bradlaugh in 1877 and of Edward True-love in the succeeding year, for distributing birth control publications, aroused enormous public interest and led to very great sales of the literature in question. And the sixty or seventy years that have elapsed since, having seen the technological advances of rubber vulcanisation and latex treatment, have brought contraceptive means within the grasp of virtually all in the more advanced countries. This introduces social and moral complications of the first magnitude, and it is clearly necessary for each person to come to a decision on the ethics of family limitation.

In this, as in any other matter, the individual has the



## Sex Education

right to try to persuade others to his viewpoint, whatever it may be. Normally, however, except where parents are instructing their own children, sex educationists do not speak simply as individuals. As officials of an organisation, as employees of a local authority, as teachers or as youth leaders, they cannot completely divest themselves of their corporate status and speak purely as private persons. It would not be just, for example, if a meeting on sex were arranged in a youth club containing members of various religious faiths or ethical convictions, for the speaker on the one hand to use it as an occasion for birth control propaganda, or on the other hand for a tirade against contraception. Usually, however, no objection would be raised to the factual answering of questions raised by members of an audience — and indeed, to avoid giving an answer would immediately diminish confidence in the speaker. Such questions, nevertheless, need to be answered with great care, for it is necessary to respect other people's convictions without surrendering one's own. That this can be done is well shown by the fact that in sex education in Britain to-day there collaborate Protestants, Roman Catholics, Jews and Agnostics.

In a different society such compromise would not be so necessary and might indeed scarcely be possible. There are countries where every possible obstacle, legal and extra-legal, is placed in the way of the dissemination of contraceptive knowledge ; there are others where the governmental apparatus itself undertakes such dissemination. But in drawing up plans for sex education in our particular society at this particular period of history, it is necessary to compromise on some points in order not to jeopardise the whole work. Compromise naturally has its limits if it is not to degenerate into the loss of all principle, and since it is vital that the supremely important task of sex education should be in the hands of principled people, it is necessary that they should be left such discretion on this, as on other controversial matters, as will prevent the violation of their consciences.



## The Social Setting

### NUDITY

Since a society's attitude to sex is usually largely bound up with its view of nakedness, it is important to realise how widely variant such views have been, and how they have been influenced by religious and other factors. In ancient Sparta, youths and maidens would play and wrestle with each other quite nude, and this was in no way regarded as indecent. Rome had naked entertainers in its circuses, but the general attitude was grosser and public nudity was not in general recognised as proper for well-born families. With Christianity there came a great change. Faced as they were with the licentiousness of the Roman world of that time, the early converts set their faces against 'the flesh'; and this reaction passing to extremes, the change had during succeeding centuries an unfortunate influence on the public attitude to nudity. There seems no doubt, however, that traces of the earlier views persisted in part for a long time; and so late as the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, Christian sects in Germany and France believed in public nudity (as indeed did smaller groups into modern times).

It is interesting, too, to note that in medieval England adults of both sexes often mingled in public baths and on other special occasions. Actual laws against nudity are of very late development. In his entry for July 29, 1667, Pepys records that a Quaker entering Westminster Hall to call on those there assembled to repent, was naked except that he was "very civilly tied about the privities to avoid scandal" — and there was apparently no question of legal proceedings against him, or against others who exposed themselves in public during the succeeding century. By the time that Queen Victoria came to the throne, the movement against nudity had achieved victory, and missionaries all over the world seemed to regard it as one of their major tasks to clothe naked tropical converts.

The victory, however, was neither complete nor per-



## Sex Education

manent. Before very long a reaction set in and poets and writers in many countries began to advocate nakedness on both hygienic and moral grounds ; and towards the turn of the century there spread out from Central Europe a movement in favour of nudism. Unfortunately the case for nudity is prejudiced in Great Britain to-day by two not quite healthy manifestations. First there are the nudist ' colonies ', which by the very fact that they *are* colonies, isolated from the general life of the community, can scarcely fail to make nudity appear somewhat abnormal. Then there are the displays of the ' strip-tease ' type, the appeal of which is definitely salacious. What is needed is an improvement of the law which would allow people to bathe and sunbathe nude without hiding themselves in special camps, and a cleansing of the public attitude which would make the music hall display lose its spice.

### SEXUAL ABERRATIONS

Those who undertake the task of sex education are sure at some time or another to come up against cases of, or enquiries about, various sexual abnormalities, and perhaps especially homosexuality. They need, therefore, to try to divest themselves of condemnatory attitudes based largely on ignorance and prejudice, and to equip themselves with an understanding of this very thorny problem.

The first point to realise is that there is no hard and fast boundary between normality and deviation — the one grades insensibly into the other. For example, various estimates of the modes of manifestation of homosexual feeling give a figure of only about 10 per cent of male invert<sup>s</sup> who practise pederasty, about 40 per cent who gain satisfaction by intercrural movement, about 30 per cent who go no further than mutual masturbation, and about 20 per cent who refrain from any overt physical expression of their feelings.



## The Social Setting

Such figures are made the less precise by the difficulty of determining just what degree of activity or feeling is sufficient to label a person as homosexual. Most of us have in childhood gone through a phase of attraction to members of our own sex, and as long as the phase is a temporary one, it cannot be regarded as a deviation. Other adults retain this emotional bias all their lives and make it the basis of extremely valuable work as teachers, religious and social workers, and leaders of children's and young people's organisations. Technically they may be invert, but so long as they seek no physical expression and do not dominate their charges emotionally, they are a very valuable element in society.

Homosexuality is by no means a novel device of modern human decadence. Not only may it be traced back to the ancient Egyptians, but it is actually to be observed in other animals, such as baboons and chimpanzees. Among many Oriental peoples homosexuality has been common ; and in the finest periods of Greece, homosexual love, so far from being looked upon as a vice, was by many regarded as actually on a higher plane than heterosexual love. This view was probably connected with the fact that the Greek matron (and much the same applied in Rome) was regarded as a bearer and rearer of children rather than as a soul-mate of her husband. It was mainly in homosexual relations that physical attraction was amalgamed with feelings of devotion and with intellectual companionship. Plato describes homosexuals in ancient Greece in terms quite free from disparagement. " It is very unjust " he says, " that they should be accused of immodesty, for it is not through lack of modesty that they act in this way ; it is because they have a strong soul, manly courage, and a virile character, that they seek their own kind." Be our attitude what it may, there is no disguising the fact that homosexuality has been a sexual attitude not only of the philosophers of Greece but also of many of the finest spirits of all ages. This is adduced not as an argument in favour of homosexuality — on the con-



## Sex Education

trary, it is contended that homosexuality is a thing to be avoided — but as a fact that must be reckoned with.

For the present consideration, the really important point is the extent to which homosexuality is due to congenital tendencies and to social influences respectively. At the one extreme it has been claimed, as by Hirschfeld, that “homosexuality is innate in the individual, and not acquired by him during his life” ; while at the other the psycho-analysts have tended to place emphasis upon the influence of early experiences. It is the age-old argument of ‘heredity versus environment’ — an argument that is from the start based on a misapprehension. It is not a question of the influence of heredity *or* the influence of environment — every characteristic we exhibit owes something to *each*. The fact that homosexuality is particularly common in some societies — whether that of philosophers in ancient Greece or that of sailors or convicts in modern England — suggests social influence. The fact that in similar circumstances some individuals become homosexual and others do not, suggests congenital influence. In neither case does the suggestion amount to actual proof, for all other variables have not been eliminated. But where rigid proof is not available, one must be guided by personal impressions and general principles ; and these lead to the conclusion that homosexuality will be much reduced in a society in which children do not grow up under the almost exclusive influence of parents of the one sex, and in which adults do not need to go to members of their own sex in order to find tender affection and intellectual companionship. (Conversely, where it is held that ‘woman’s place is in the home’ and that the father has no responsibility for the early care of his children ; where a woman’s sphere is bounded by the ‘three k’s’ — kids, kirk and kitchen— so that she has no opportunity of acquiring other wider stimulating interests which would enable her to share intellectual comradeship with her husband, homosexuality will be encouraged.)



## The Social Setting

The attitude of society to homosexuals has varied from great respect, through mildly amused tolerance, to ignorant and vindictive cruelty. In some homosexuals there is definite evidence of functional and even of anatomical abnormality. Some male invert has pelvic proportions reminiscent of those of the female, as well as falsetto voice and typically female hair and fat distribution. Others show no anatomical abnormality, but are, through no fault of their own, emotionally disposed to their own sex. In either case, sympathetic understanding rather than brutal punishment is called for from society. On the other hand, we cannot allow young children who would otherwise grow up into normal heterosexual adults to be deviated along the path of homosexuality. While refraining from harsh punishment, society must make it clear that it will not tolerate homosexual seduction and must get rid of those institutions which tend to encourage it.

Much the same might be said of other sexual aberrations. In virtually all cases there is no doubt an intermingling of intrinsic and extrinsic factors. Thus while education and medical treatment may help some individuals to achieve or approach normality, or at least to refrain from the more gross manifestations of their abnormality, it would be utopian to expect completely to solve the problem by such means alone. The whole social set-up needs improving too.

## THE VENEREAL DISEASES

It is occasionally suggested, and more often implied, that the main aim of sex education is the eradication of venereal infection. No one can deny the importance of the struggle against syphilis and gonorrhoea, and it is reasonable to hope that a well-conceived and well-executed scheme of sex education may be a powerful factor in it. But sex education is not mere anti-venereal disease propaganda; it is preparation to live a joyous, well-balanced and fruitful life. Not only is it important that the conception of sex as a fine and



## Sex Education

clean thing should not be too closely connected in people's minds with the pathology of the venereal diseases ; it is also important that the social factors tending to encourage the spread of those diseases should not be overlooked. The questions of the economic barriers to early marriage, of the general status of women in society, of the social conditions in our great ports and inland towns, of the whole of the working of our administrative machine — all these need careful consideration. Sex education must be expected neither to lead of itself to the eradication of the diseases, nor to overload itself with anti-venereal disease propaganda. The former it cannot do ; the latter should not be demanded of it.

### IMMEDIATE POSSIBILITIES

There is a great temptation in sex education, as indeed in education generally, to draw up magnificent schemes that are totally irrelevant to the particular social setting within which they are to be put into practice. But to produce optimum results, plans must not be devised in academic isolation. They need to be impregnated through and through with an appreciation of what is possible and desirable here and now, not what might be in a brave new world. Our lives would certainly be impoverished without the vision of the Utopian, but such extreme long-sightedness is not always the most valuable in our everyday work. In these pages therefore, an effort has been made, while keeping ultimate ideals in view, to concentrate in the main upon fairly immediate possibilities.



## Chapter Three

### The Parent's Part

ΣΩ. οὐκοῦν οἶσθ' ὅτι ἀρχὴ παντὸς ἔργου μέγιστον, ἄλλως τε καὶ νέω καὶ ἀπαλῶ ὄττωσιν; μάλιστα γὰρ δὴ τότε πλάττεται καὶ ἐνδύεται τύπος ὃν ἂν τις βούληται ἐνσημῆνασθαι ἐκάστω.

ΑΔ. κομιδῇ μὲν οὖν.

PLATO

#### IMPORTANCE OF EARLY YEARS

MORE than two thousand years ago Plato put into the mouth of Socrates the question "Now you appreciate, don't you, that in every work the beginning is a very important part, especially in the case of anything young and tender, for that is the time when it is most easily shaped, and the impression that one might like to stamp on each is most easily taken?" — and to-day most of us would reply with Adeimantos, "Quite so."

Parents have a part to play in sex education of which neither teachers nor anyone else can relieve them. Others can give the necessary factual information, but none other can have the same influence on the child's whole outlook on life. Those first few years in the home are of fundamental importance in emotional development. On impressions gained and attitudes formed in the first five years of life, depend to a considerable extent the success and happiness of the adult. It is, therefore, particularly important that mother and father should agree in advance how they are going to educate their children.

Every parent will know how active is the life of the infant. Coming at the age of nine months (biological, not legal age) from the security of its mother's womb, it enters a world in which everything is new. Apart from acquiring the simple



## Sex Education

motor skills and gaining control of its own body, the child must adjust itself gradually to a complex society. And its first adjustments must be to that society in miniature, the family. Family relationships therefore provide the field for the first immature attempts at social adjustment. Here in the comparative safety of the home, mistakes may be made with relative immunity, and from them important lessons learned.

### PRIMITIVE FUNCTIONS

It is sometimes stated that sex education should begin with the answer to the child's first question ; but this is leaving it too late. If it is agreed that sex education includes the encouragement of emotional stability, then the first relevant exercise is the establishment of satisfactory breast feeding. This is not a theme to expand here, but since suckling is the major interest and need of a baby during its first few months, it is clear that contentment in this respect will play a great part in the establishment of a feeling of emotional security.

The other major activity of the babe is the voiding of waste material. Emptying its bowels and its bladder on several occasions each day, it often finds considerable satisfaction in the process. All too often the parents or older siblings convey the impression that there is something essentially ' dirty ' or ' nasty ' about these processes, and in doing this they do great wrong. It is certainly a great convenience for adequate control to be achieved at an early date, so that the washing of dirty napkins is reduced to a minimum. But too often this control is achieved at too high a cost. The child is coerced into clean habits in such a way that it develops a repugnance for, or an excessive interest in, the processes of urination and defaecation. Because of the close physical proximity and nervous connection between the voiding and the genital organs, attitudes developed with reference to the former are likely to be transferred to the latter.



## The Parent's Part

Young children, indeed, regard the genitals as purely excretory in function. Any feeling of distaste for the process or the products of voiding may, therefore, have a decidedly unfortunate influence on later feelings about sex. Thus parents are playing an important part in the sex education of their children when they take care not to encourage such feelings, but on the other hand convey the impression that voiding, like eating, is a perfectly normal and proper process.

### INFANTILE MASTURBATION

Attention to the sex organs themselves is quite usually paid by infants. Exploring the world around them, their visual co-ordination still very imperfect, they depend to a large extent for their knowledge of reality upon the sense of touch. They touch their ears and their eyes and their mouth. And one day they touch their genital organs. It gives them a pleasant sensation, for these parts are very richly supplied with nerve endings, and they learn to fondle them, as one of the comparatively few pleasant occupations they know. Thus infantile masturbation is on a purely sensual level and can in no way be regarded as reprehensible. Unfortunately many parents, mistaking the exploratory path of innocence for the broad highway of incipient vice, either tell the child not to be 'nasty' or 'rude', or by some action show their disapproval. What is the poor infant to think, that it may safely pull its nose and may twiddle its toes with impunity—but if it does the same in a region about half-way between, it incurs displeasure? Clearly there is nothing better calculated to encourage from the earliest days the feeling that there is something quite isolated from the rest of life, something unclean, about the sexual organs, and hence at a later date by association, about the sexual functions. The result of disapproval is likely to be either an intensification of the habit or its suppression with the development of unfortunate psychological complexes.



## Sex Education

It is undesirable that an infant should masturbate too frequently, for that might cause precocious sexual stimulation ; but it is equally undesirable that it should be loaded down so young with a feeling of shame. The first thing for the parent to do is to remove any accidental physical irritants which may be directing overmuch attention to the genital regions. It may be that the parts are rather dirty, and a quick daily wash (pulling back the foreskin in the case of a boy) will be helpful. If, however, the infant strongly objects to this, or appears to focus undue attention on the sex organs during their cleansing, it is wise to discontinue for a little while. In difficult cases, medical opinion may favour circumcision of boys. Sometimes the crib may be too warm, and looser and lighter coverings are indicated. Often, however, there appears to be no very obvious external excitement, and all that can be done is to offer the infant an alternative equally enthralling occupation. But never should condemnation be indicated.

An important point is that masturbation, like thumb-sucking, is a way of deriving contentment, and is most likely to occur in the child whose life is not a completely satisfying one. So while adopting any or all of the immediate measures indicated above, it is necessary to search for something deeper. Is there anything missing in the infant's emotional life ? Does it perhaps not find its parents affectionate enough ? Does it feel quite secure in the world, or have there been happenings which have unsettled it ? The important thing is not so much the masturbation itself, for most children grow out of that as they do out of thumb-sucking. What is important is the emotional need of which masturbation may be a sign, and that should be discovered and satisfied.

## NUDITY

From very early days, a right attitude to sex may be encouraged in other ways too. It is a commonplace that



## The Parent's Part

inhibitions about sex are often associated with similar ones about nudity ; so if a child from the first learns to regard nudity as in no way an indecent phenomenon, it is reasonable to hope that it will be helped in its development of a healthy attitude to sex. Those in charge of children then, whether in the home, the school or elsewhere, should constantly endeavour to avoid the suggestion that nudity is in any way of itself reprehensible.

Brother John need not be kept out of the bathroom because sister Jane is scantily clothed — or not clothed at all — and many parents have the good sense to allow their young children of both sexes to bath together. This has the extra advantage of letting them see from quite early years what the body of the other sex is like, thus preventing later prurient curiosity and shock at belated discovery. So far as young children are concerned, there seems no reason either why they should be ushered from the room if their parents happen to be undressed, although naturally as they grow older they will gradually learn to respect other people's privacy, as they will expect their own to be respected.

Many parents, perhaps having suffered embarrassment by the sudden appearance of their nude offspring before company, seem to be worried by their 'shameless immodesty'. But one must look at the matter from the point of view of the child. The fact is that children often discard their clothes with no ulterior motive, but merely because they feel freer without them, and have not yet been inculcated with prudishness.

But even when there is a positive desire to display their own bodies and observe their friends', this is no cause for worry. We all have exhibitionist and *voyeur* elements in our make-up, and it is only when they become exclusive or excessive that abnormality appears on the scene. On the other hand, children must, to save both themselves and others from embarrassment, learn as they grow up that there are



## Sex Education

occasions and places, including most public occasions and public places, where nudity is frowned upon.

### SEXUALITY IN CHILDREN

Just as young children often show an inclination to handle their sex organs, just as they often take a delight in displaying their bodies, so also their other activities often have an obviously sexual content. Who has passed through childhood without playing 'father and mother' with other little boys and girls? Who has not played 'the doctor game', perhaps involving undressing each other in turn and examining each other's bodies, including the sex organs? This is not to suggest that the sexual interest is a conscious one, or even that it is necessarily the most important component; but it is usually there. Sometimes the games become more overtly sexual in nature, and may almost be counted as sexual experimentation, but this matter is considered more fully in Chapter Five.

As Freud pointed out many years ago, "the newborn infant brings sexuality with it into the world, sexual sensations accompany it through the days of lactation and childhood, and very few children can fail to experience sexual activities and feelings before the period of puberty". It is surprising that so many people appear rather startled and even worried by these early manifestations of sex in children. None of our faculties appears suddenly in us one day fully fledged; each perfected activity is the result of a long period of practice and of trial at a lower level, and sexuality is no exception. So far from this early groping being in any way reprehensible, it is indispensable to the final achievement of maturity.

It is, however, wise to guard against reading too much sexuality into children's activities. If a little girl undresses a little boy, there *may* be a sexual interest; but it is not unlikely that it is merely a simple repetition of what has



## The Parent's Part

been done scores of times with dolls. And is it to be wondered at that a child is rather mystified if the latter activity evokes no comment, but the former brings disapproval?

Where older children are concerned, the issue is more doubtful. There is always the possibility of definite sexual interest, but at any rate in some cases, many of the so-called 'sexual offences' — boys attempting to pull at girls' clothes while playing together in the sunshine, and so on — are merely outlets for healthy high spirits.

### PRECOCIOUS STIMULATION

Precisely because sexuality exists even in young children, albeit often latent, it is important to avoid any action which might precociously stimulate it. There are parents ('modern', they consider themselves) who, realising the foolishness of rushing their child out of the room on every occasion when they might be observed ungarbed, go to the other extreme and almost consider it a duty to ensure that the child shall frequently see them naked. But frequent and intimate views of the adult body may well cause excessive interest in its peculiarities. One does not wish to hide from the child the fact that its father has a penis and its mother has breasts; but neither should one make it easy for undue attention to be focussed on these organs. In this, as in everything else, one must find the golden mean.

In some cases matters are much worse. Bad housing conditions, which no self-respecting community should tolerate for a moment, still provide the homes of many of our children. And in these homes it is virtually impossible to achieve any real degree of privacy. Adolescent boys and girls have to share bedrooms and even beds, and in the worst cases children have to share them with their parents. But even where home congestion does not make it extremely difficult for the parents to make love in private, it is some-



## Sex Education

times assumed that an infant is 'too young to understand'. Perhaps this is so; but what cannot be completely understood may nevertheless make a deep impression, and many children have been emotionally injured by observing intimacy between their parents. They may be over-stimulated sexually or they may come to feel that sex is an affair of violence; but in either case they will have been injured. Discretion, as well as frankness, is needed.

### EARLY QUESTIONS

One of the most delightful (even if at times infuriating) characteristics of infancy is its insatiable curiosity. On every conceivable point question follows question without pause, and each answer seems only to release a fresh deluge of enquiry — and naturally enough, since birth and reproduction and sex are important parts of life, some questions concern them. The parent who gladly gives information about the centre of our universe — the sun, who willingly explains that motor-cars are made in factories and that horses are quite different from cows, is one day faced with questions about the centre of the child's universe — himself, about how babies are made and about the differences between boys and girls. And what is the young questioner to think if the former queries are gladly and honestly answered, but the latter side-tracked or met with deceit? The immediate reaction to avoidance must be that there is something queer about these matters since they so obviously make mother and father ill at ease; and when years later the lies are found out, the child's faith in its parents must receive a severe jolt.

Away back in the seventeenth century Hobbes lamented in his *Leviathan* that "Children . . . are made to believe by the women that their brothers and sisters are not born but found in the garden", and during three hundred years the main advance was in the specification of the particular species of garden bush concerned. But in the last decade parental



## The Parent's Part

opinion has changed rapidly, and to-day it is scarcely necessary to argue at length the case for answering questions honestly. What is now needed is to work out the best ways of doing so.

One guiding principle is that to the infant no question is indecent, and none should be greeted in such a way as to convey the impression that it should never have been asked. Another is that while falsehood should have no place in an answer, the truth need not always be given in heroic doses, but should be dispensed with discretion according to the degree of the child's curiosity, the extent of its knowledge and the state of its emotions. A third is that replies to questions about birth no more need hushed and saintly tones than do answers to queries about billiard balls, and that the child should not be expected to receive them in any different manner. A fourth is that most parents, because of their own upbringing, *do* in fact find these enquiries rather difficult to meet, and should think out well in advance just how they are going to deal with them. In this they may be helped by Chapter Seven.

### THE NEW BABY

A somewhat similar situation arises when an addition to the family is expected. What is to be done with young Bill and Betty who, observant little creatures as they are, are quite likely to notice Mummy getting fat, and bubbling over with curiosity, are almost sure to make comments about it? And what about when the new baby arrives, and occupies that prime place in its parents' attentions previously occupied by another child? Then for the sulks and squalls and tears!

The loss of its premier position can scarcely be expected ever to be really welcomed by the late baby, but it can by proper preparation be made a good deal more tolerable. Most children, properly primed, will welcome the prospect of having a new baby brother or sister, and the process of priming may be an invaluable medium of sex education.



## Sex Education

Once the information is imparted that in so many months the baby is expected, the initiative may safely be left with the child. One question will lead to another, and if the parents answer them with honesty and discretion, giving sufficient detail to satisfy but not to surfeit, a useful job will have been done. The child may turn out to have the most bizarre — yet superficially logical — ideas, like the youngster who, having been informed that little girls grow inside their mummies, immediately volunteered the suggestion, "Oh, I see! And I suppose little boys grow inside their daddies?" Or they may show standards of value rather novel to adults, like one young daughter of an eminent educationist, who was quite enamoured of horses. Fresh in from a ride one day, she was informed that her mother was expecting a baby. "Oh, Mummy!" she asked, "are we really going to have a new baby? Will it be a little boy or a little girl?" "I don't know, dear," she was told. "You never know what it will be until it arrives." "Don't you, Mummy?" the child came back. "Then I suppose it *might* be a little horse?" And then as an afterthought, "Mummy, wouldn't it be lovely if it *was* a little horse?" If nothing else were to argue in favour of honesty, the delightful response of the child would almost be sufficient.

Knowing that an addition to the family is expected, the children can each do some little thing to prepare for it. In the case of an older child it may be actual sewing or knitting, with younger children merely fetching cotton or wool for the mother. It may be helping father to distemper the nursery or merely getting in his way while trying to help. And in all cases it will be by showing special consideration for mother. But by one means or another, each child can be encouraged to feel that it is *our* baby that is on its way, and not merely Mummy's, that a new friend is coming and not an unwelcome usurper.

It is, however, well to take steps to prevent excessive expectations in an only child, who may often look forward



## The Parent's Part

so much to the arrival of a sibling, and may expect so much companionship from it, that it suffers grievous disappointment when it discovers how limited the new baby's play activities are.

Once the baby has arrived, particular care should be taken to give the other children no grounds for jealousy. It is, indeed, often wise to pay particular attention to the late baby for a while, and perhaps to give it more than its normal share of cuddling, while refraining from cuddling the new arrival — which, incidentally, is probably better without it for a time.

There have been many testimonies to the completely natural way in which children react to such preparation, but one mother has given such a delightful description of her experiences that it seems worth while to quote from it at some length.

When my third baby was coming [she writes] my other children were four and six respectively, and we knew that if we were to avoid jealousy we must prepare John and Elizabeth. There was such a small space between them that the question had not come up before.

I told the children that Daddy and I were thinking of growing another baby sometime that year. They were very pleased by the idea, but demanded what I meant by growing a baby.

"Just that," I said, "if you want a baby you have to grow it."

"Grow it," they echoed. "What do you mean?"

"Well, you grow, don't you?" I asked. "You are bigger this year than you were last, and much bigger than you were when that photograph was taken. A new baby grows like that; it starts from something so small that you can't see it, and when it is the proper size a baby ought to be, it gets born."

Of course the inevitable question was soon asked, "Where is the baby now?" and when I told them they just would not believe me; they thought it was a joke, and that it was rather clever of me to have made such a good one.

"But it is," I assured them. "Inside my body I have a kind of cradle, or a nest, and the new baby is in there quite safe and warm. What is more, that is where I grew both of you, only you



## Sex Education

can't remember. It is so small at the minute it doesn't show, but later on, when it is nearly ready to be born, I shall look ever so fat, because my skin is like elastic there, and it stretches and then goes the usual size again afterwards." . . .

I explained, too, that some people didn't even tell their children because they were so afraid that their children could not keep a secret. "And then," I added, "they tell them all sorts of jokes as to where the baby came from. One story is that a stork brought it, or that they found it in the garden under a gooseberry bush, and people will tell you that about their babies too." . . .

Then I discovered that John was plunged into a sea of jealousy because Elizabeth was crowing over him that when she grew up she would grow babies, but that boys had no nests inside them so they couldn't. John demanded why it was he had no share in growing babies, and I found I was up against questions which were apparently much more difficult to cope with.

Having set out with the intention of answering our children's questions truthfully as they arose, I did my best. "You needn't worry, John," I said. "A mother can't grow a baby unless a father helps her. When boys grow up to be men and get married, *they* grow part of the seeds that the babies start from. . . . The mother grows half and the father grows half, and when the father gives his half to the mother the two join and from that tiny thing a baby grows." . . .

"Ah," said John. "I see." And as I saw all sorts of fresh questions hovering on the tip of his tongue, I went on hastily, "Yes, and when you are grown up, Daddy will tell you all about the seeds and how to plant them." And to my relief that satisfied him for the time being, for I did not feel he was old enough nor that I was capable of tackling any further questions then. . . .

As the months passed and my figure changed, John and Elizabeth took more and more interest in the baby's coming, and I realised that I need not have felt embarrassed about telling them; it was a matter of delight and wonder to them, and they enjoyed taking care of me. "Can we feel the baby?" they would ask, or if I started doing anything specially strenuous, "Mummy, do be careful, you'll hurt the baby." Their altruism even went so far as to suggest that I should eat the last helpings of their favourite puddings 'for the baby'. It became not merely a family secret



## The Parent's Part

but a co-operative preparation on the part of the whole family. . . .

As the day approached I used to wake in the morning to see two small people in their nightgowns peeping into the cradle which was ready near my bed, and hear a whispered "Not yet, Elizabeth" or "Not yet, John." And I will never forget the shriek of delight when at last the morning arrived and the baby was there.

John went straight out after breakfast and called to our neighbour, "Mr. Willis, we've got a new baby."

"Have you, John?" said Mr. Willis, "wherever have you got it from?"

"We found it under a gooseberry bush," said John. "Ha! ha! ha!" and bursting into my room he said breathlessly, "Mummy, I've played the proper joke on Mr. Willis about the gooseberry bush."<sup>1</sup>

### PRE-PUBERTY

It is not only in infancy that people ask questions about sex. In early childhood they will, if their faith in their parents has not already been shattered, begin to enquire about the rôle of the father in reproduction, and for many parents this is the most difficult question of all. But it need not be difficult. To the child the query is a perfectly natural and perfectly proper one, and it will accept an honest answer with no trace of embarrassment, so long as the parent does not betray any. To put off the child 'until you are older' is usually unwise. For one thing, the older the child the more likely is the parent to *be* embarrassed. The right time for enlightenment is when the child seeks it, not when the parent thinks that an appropriate age has been reached. To decide that 'Johnny has reached his such-and-such birthday, and it's time I told him the facts of life' is a mechanical and futile approach to the problem. The important thing is that an atmosphere of confidence should be engendered in the home, and then the child will set the pace. And if the parent does not keep up with it, we may

<sup>1</sup> Anne Proctor, *Health Education Journal*, Vol. II, No. 1, January 1944.



## Sex Education

be sure that street-corner and playground informants will.

### MENSTRUATION

There are some things, however, in which the parent should act as pacemaker, because the adult knows what sort of ground lies ahead and the child does not. Some time from about the age of twelve onwards a girl will begin her periods, and she needs to be prepared in advance. So about her eleventh year, having already a simple understanding of the main facts of reproduction, she should be taught the significance of menstruation and told of its imminence. Perhaps a general statement about the use of sanitary towels may be included, but in any event the girl should be told to let her mother know when the first sign appears, so that she can be given further details of how to cope with it.

It is important that all this should be done in such a way as to instil no sense of repugnance. Menstruation can never be a particularly aesthetic thing, but it is possible to avoid that hang-over of primitive taboo which still manifests itself to-day in a feeling of distaste and sometimes even horror. Unfortunately there are still parents who display this attitude, as is evidenced by the comment of a London schoolgirl whose class had recently had lessons on reproduction that "If children have never been taught about monthly period, when they have it they might be frightened, or their mother would tell them it was nasty." The monthly discharge is not an illness or a thing unclean, and girls should not be encouraged to think that it is. Most medical opinion is that normal activities — walking, schoolwork, washing and so on — can perfectly well be continued in most cases during the period. Sometimes there really is pain, and if this continues a doctor should be consulted. Often, moreover, the periods are at first irregular, and girls need to be reassured that this should not disturb them. And since menstruation can scarcely fail to be an inconvenience, girls should be en-



## The Parent's Part

couraged to understand its value and its significance from the point of view of childbirth. An inconvenience is more gladly borne when there seems to be some point in bearing it.

### SEMINAL EMISSION

Boys should also have an idea of the significance of menstruation, so that they do not build up on a basis of ignorance an atmosphere of mystery about their sister's periods. But more important is a preparation for the changes which will occur in themselves during adolescence. As their testes become active from about the age of fourteen onwards, they will probably have occasional night losses of semen, the so-called 'seminal emissions'. These, accompanied as they often are by erotic dreams, cause adolescent lads a good deal of worry, and parents should tell their sons what to expect, and explain to them the naturalness and harmlessness of these emissions. And just as girls need to be reassured that initial menstrual irregularity need not be a cause for alarm, so boys should be told that a late onset of emission does not necessarily indicate any sexual weakness. It is worth while to mention the matter to girls also, since this knowledge that boys have their little problems too, may go some way towards reconciling them to the inconvenience of menstruation. It may not be the very best moral code which allows one person to derive any satisfaction from another's troubles, but it is a fact that many girls do have a feeling of injustice that only their sex has to put up with inconvenience, and are happier when this feeling is removed. Most girls, moreover, will one day have sons of their own, and will be the better mothers for understanding this matter.

### MASTURBATION

Another problem of adolescence, particularly so far as boys are concerned, is that of masturbation. This is con-



## Sex Education

sidered again in Chapters Five and Six ; but it is as well to say immediately that fathers should make a special point of setting their sons at ease on the matter. The case with girls is somewhat different, since deliberate masturbation appears to be somewhat rare among adolescents, whatever may be its incidence among mature and sexually awakened women. It is, however, wise for the mother to be ready to have a chat with her daughter should there seem to be any reason to suspect addiction to the habit. And the operative word is ' chat ', not ' sermon '. This is not an occasion for a deadly serious and sanctimonious ' heart-to-heart '. Indeed, discussions on sex between parent and child should be as informal in nature as those on soccer. Neither by word nor by manner should the impression be conveyed that sex is a thing apart from the rest of life. The approach throughout should be a perfectly natural one.

### ADOLESCENT ROMANCES

Parents can do a good deal to help their children to have a smooth passage through the years of adolescence, by recognising the peculiarities of the period and making due allowance for them. Quite clearly, young people cannot be allowed full rein to their waywardness at the expense of the happiness and comfort of the rest of the household, but a little latitude needs to be granted. A developing sense of maturity needs an increasing allowance of independence, and particularly of independence in personal relationships. It is a commonplace to say that adolescents should be encouraged to bring their boy and girl friends home on occasion ; but this must not be an excuse for parental interference. It sometimes happens that mother is quite happy when Jane brings John home to tea one Sunday, but begins to raise objections when next week she brings Jim, and Jack the week after. In her very natural desire that her daughter should not be completely promiscuous, she tends to demand from the



## The Parent's Part

adolescent a standard of monophily appropriate to the adult. And before very long Jane in self-defence ceases to invite *any* of her boy friends home. Adolescence is a period of exploration, and it is natural enough for affections to oscillate. Gradually they will become less erratic, and as emotional and social development proceed, will settle down to a more stable and mature relationship.

These adolescent romances will often involve a good deal of cinema-going and dancing and late nights, and are the cause of much domestic friction. Parents will obviously wish to keep an eye on their children's behaviour and to pull tight the reins on occasion, but normally a good deal of latitude can safely be allowed. Adolescents are adults in the making, and they can only learn to behave with adult responsibility by being permitted to exercise it. The fear that sexual immorality may occur is no doubt justified in some cases ; but it is more than doubtful whether parental prohibition will have much of a deterrent effect. What may have some influence is a simple statement of the risks of illegitimacy and venereal infection, and an explanation of how easily sexual feelings may be aroused and of how readily a couple who are fond of each other may find themselves slipping through the various stages of love-making until they find that they have gone further than they ever intended or thought wise. And if the home atmosphere is all that it should be, girls and boys in their teens will be willing to discuss these matters with their parents and will welcome their help in establishing standards of behaviour for themselves. Parents must be prepared to trust their children if they wish in return to be trusted, and if this involves risk, the risk must be accepted. When the bud unfolds and flowers, it loses a good deal of its protection and becomes exposed to all the perils of the weather, but the bloom is more glorious than the bud. And unless the flowering takes place, there is no possibility of mature fruition.



# Sex Education

## ABOUT TO MARRY

Matters take a different turn when a son or daughter becomes engaged and is contemplating marriage in the not too distant future. If earlier education has been what it should be, there will be no risk of the tragedy that so often attends a marriage in which one or both partners are largely ignorant of what it implies, although even to-day such cases do occur. But there is much more to marriage than the mere mechanics of intercourse — there is a whole way of life to be learned. Of this way, by no means all can be charted from books ; but parents can help a good deal by guiding their child's reading. There are some excellent books and many poor ones, and it may make a great deal of difference if a couple get hold of the best. Because of the emotional content of the parent-child relationship, it will perhaps usually be the case that on both sides there is some reluctance to discuss the more intimate details of married life ; but father or mother may be able to suggest that the couple should have chats — perhaps together, perhaps separately — with other wise and sympathetic counsellors. But while parents can help by making some suggestions, they may be able to help most of all by not making too many.

## CHILDREN AS INDIVIDUALS

It is clear from the very nature of humans that no cut-and-dried methods may be prescribed for dealing with these matters. We are not turned out by the million, all identical, from mass-production factories. Ours is one of the most variable of all species, and the variability extends from physical characters to intellectual and emotional constitution. Each child is therefore an individual, and needs individual handling. George may need a liberal display of affection ; Janet may need but little. What would be a reasonable standard of behaviour to expect of one child would represent



## The Parent's Part

intolerable harshness to another, (and one's reins may be another's chains.) It is necessary always to try to look at things from each individual child's point of view, and to gauge accordingly one's degree of tolerance or of sternness, one's answer to queries and one's stimulation of curiosity, one's suggestions or one's silence. And it is necessary to do all this without offending the other children's sense of fair play. Parental love is not enough. Parental knowledge and intelligence are needed too. X

### THE HOME ATMOSPHERE

Whatever parents may do to answer their children's specific questions, to give them detailed knowledge and to offer them guidance, in the long run the most valuable contribution they can make to the sex education of their offspring is to provide a good home for them. Not necessarily good in the quality of its furniture or the pile of its carpets, but good in its whole atmosphere. No amount of teaching on the excellence of sex will be of much avail if the parents themselves feel uneasy about it and betray their uneasiness by their behaviour ; no emphasis on the happiness of marriage will be effective if the child grows up in an atmosphere of parental bickering. Differences of opinion on some points two people are bound to have, the more when they spend the best years of their lives in intimacy ; but to allow differences to degenerate into quarrels is to portray marriage at its poorest and is the worst possible sort of sex education. Children are notoriously more impressed by practice than by precept, and quibbling disputes between their parents will more than counterbalance high-sounding statements about the mutual love of man and wife. And this does not apply only to older children, for the very babe is influenced by emotional atmosphere long before it is capable of understanding the spoken word. It might almost be a maxim in mental hygiene that ' where there's dissension there's danger '.



## Sex Education

The danger is aggravated by the fact that if either partner to a marriage is emotionally unsatisfied, attempts may be made to remedy the deficiency by excessive attention to the children. Many a boy's natural development is stifled by an over-powering mother-love, which makes it almost impossible for him to achieve satisfactory emancipation later, to the obvious detriment of his own love life. Since the father in present society usually has business or sporting interests outside the home, the converse does not so often occur with girls ; but when it does the effects may be equally unfortunate for, particularly during adolescence, girls are inclined to become strongly attached to their fathers. This attachment, indeed, is often the model for later attachments to other men ; and that is why it is particularly important that the father's character should be one which will inspire high ideals during this most idealistic period.

It used generally to be the case, and still is in all too many households, that Derek went out to play while Daphne helped with the domestic routine. Is it therefore to be wondered at that many boys grow up with a feeling that household duties are ' woman's work ', and that so many girls nurse a sense of grievance that they are not boys ? No sexual morality worthy of the name can be based on dereliction of duty on one side and feelings of sexual inferiority on the other. Nor, for that matter, upon a rebellion of the female, mistakenly (though perfectly understandably) manifesting itself in an assertion of identity between the sexes. The whole point of sex and the whole basis of its richness, is that man is male and woman is female, that the two sexes are indeed different. But if the difference is made the excuse for social and domestic unfairness, trouble will ensue.

Fortunately it is increasingly being recognised that father has his family duties as well as mother, and son as well as daughter. In a household of this sort, children grow up learning the best of all possible lessons about sex — that it brings comradeship and considerateness as well as passion.



## The Parent's Part

And unpleasant as washing napkins may be, the father who does his share of distasteful duty earns the right also to join in the pleasant tasks of bathing the children and playing with them and putting them to bed. The children of such parents will not grow up with the feeling that they can play off father against mother, or the idea that the one sex is kind and forgiving and the other harsh and unyielding. Attitudes of this sort built up towards mother and father may later be transferred, with disastrous effect, to other women and other men. But the child who grows up to know the relationship between father and mother as one of love and kindness and mutual help and forbearance is well on the way to satisfactory sex relationships of its own.



## Chapter Four

# The School Curriculum

Sex education must, therefore, be developed as an organic part of the entire educational programme. It must not be considered a special and isolated bit of 'curriculum' to be 'taught' at a given time, and then dismissed as finished.

BENJAMIN GRUENBERG

### THE PLACE OF SEX EDUCATION

It has already been emphasised that the imparting of information is only one aspect of sex education, and perhaps not the most important. It is, however, important enough to warrant the most careful consideration. Fairly clearly, while parents and others should give some items of information in reply to questions and on other suitable occasions, the place for a good deal of such instruction is the school.

As Frances Strain points out with reference to the United States :

Children grow up and outstrip their parents in almost any given subject. Look at home economics. Boys and girls alike flock to its classes. Yet from the time they were toddlers, their mothers have been teaching them to make beds, set the table, wipe the dishes, cook and sew. Yet the time comes when cooking becomes dietetics and food becomes chemistry, when a problem in geometry outdistances parental multiplication table knowledge, and a passage in Cicero finds home Latin inadequate.

Then the school must take over. Here are the teachers with the necessary knowledge (or at least with the ability and opportunity to equip themselves with it) and with the skill to impart it. In all schools where the matter of sex education is being considered, the staff concerned should get down to



## The School Curriculum

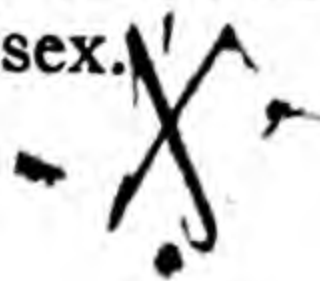
a detailed study of the content of their curriculum and the methods of its presentation.

It is sometimes thought that the introduction of sex education into a school involves merely the addition of another subject to an already overloaded curriculum, or the accretion of a few *ad hoc* lessons to it. Nothing could be further from the truth. Sex education, like health education and character training generally, should permeate the whole school life, and neither can nor should be limited to one special course or one special teacher. The facts necessary for a real understanding of sex — whether they be facts of biology or of sociology or of ethics — should by no means be gathered up from their natural setting and dumped down in a heap labelled 'sex education'; while the wholesome attitudes and ideals, which are equally important with the factual knowledge, cannot possibly be divorced from the general school tone. The better the sex education in a school, the less obvious will it be. It will just fit in naturally and unobtrusively into the ordinary life of the school and will be conspicuous only to the degree to which it is imperfect.

### NURSERY AND INFANT SCHOOLS

In nursery and infant schools, anything in the way of systematic sex instruction is quite unnecessary and indeed undesirable. Ideally, all questions should be answered honestly (although, unfortunately, there are still some parents who would object to this), and occasions may arise when the observation of pets gives the opportunity for something approaching formal instruction; but that is about the extent of explicit sex education at this stage.

Implicitly, however, sex education takes place all the while. If children share toilet and washing accommodation and play together, boy and girl naked in the sunshine, there is unlikely to be any excessive curiosity about the body of the other sex.





## Sex Education

There will naturally be *some* curiosity — the ordinary, natural, healthy curiosity to be expected of bright young children still discovering the world — and this may be particularly marked in the case of the only child who has never had the opportunity of observing the body of the other sex in the home. But it is as well for curiosity to be satisfied thus early and not be left to produce ill effects years later.

At a residential school in Surrey, the pupils were shown how to attach mirrors to long sticks, in order to observe the interiors of birds' nests without disturbing them. Somewhat to the disconcertment of the staff, some of the boys preferred to hold the mirrors between the girls' legs, so as to see up their skirts ! It is impossible to speak certainly, but at any rate it seems unlikely that this would have happened in the case of boys who had satisfied their curiosity at an earlier age (unless, of course, it was all done for the fun of hearing the girls scream — for a great deal of so-called 'sex trouble' in school is mere lightheartedness).

It is, however, worth pointing out that familiarity with the bodily appearance of contemporaries does not necessarily give the young child by any means a perfect understanding of the differences between men and women. In many ways indeed, the young girl, with her boyish figure and undeveloped breasts, is superficially more like her father than her mother. But at any rate immediate curiosity can be satisfied.

In the nursery and infant schools as in the home, care needs to be taken that training in the functions of voiding is not carried to the extent where it sets up feelings of distaste ; for the sexual and voiding organs are closely linked, and any feeling of repugnance for the latter is likely to attach itself to the former, with obviously ill effects on the attitude to sex in later years. Infantile masturbation may also crop up in the nursery school, and should be approached in the manner already described in the previous chapter.



# The School Curriculum

## THE JUNIOR SCHOOL

When the junior school is reached, further sex education becomes possible. The nature study lessons offer a valuable medium for the study of sex and reproduction, providing that attention is not limited, as it so often is, to the process of pollination. It is a fallacy that is quite widespread to assume that the child is capable of bridging unaided the gap between the hawthorn and the human. Not that the study of pollination should be neglected. Provided that facile but misleading parallels are not drawn, the sexual processes of flowers may provide useful material for the study of sex. The ideas of maleness and femaleness, of sexual cells, of fertilisation, of embryological development, of protection of the growing embryo, may all well be based on the reproduction of plants. But it is not true, as is so often stated or implied, that this is the simplest introduction. Many plants have quite complex reproductive cycles, and the types for study must be chosen very carefully if the child's ideas are not to be more confused than clarified. For those who happen to live near the coast, a seaweed such as the bladder-wrack provides a species with a reproductive process having many parallels with those of some animals. The clear-cut separation into male and female individuals, the production of motile spermatozoa and the simple fertilisation of the egg, offer a fairly close analogy with what happens in the case of the frog. But whatever plants are chosen, the study of animals also is still necessary.

Nature study walks provide the opportunity for casual reference in appropriate language to the mating of frogs, the courtship of birds, the parental care of nestlings, the suckling of lambs and so on. In none of this is it necessary to make a special point of sex, but in all of this, healthy attitudes to mating and reproduction will be gradually developed and reinforced. Much the same applies to the keeping of pets in school. Young children will learn more



## Sex Education

of sex, and learn it more smoothly, by keeping buck and doe rabbits than by many talks on reproduction. The ideas of paternity and maternity, of mating, of birth and of suckling, will gradually become part of the child's stock of knowledge and way of thinking. By keeping sticklebacks in an aquarium, the ideas of courtship, of home-making and of the responsibility of the father, may similarly be developed. In all this, the development of attitudes is enormously more important than the acquisition of knowledge.

Given the right attitudes and the right feeling of mutual trust between teacher and child, there will be no need at this stage for formal lessons on human reproduction. Long before such lessons are due, any class of normally intelligent children will have received all the information they desire as a result of questions casually asked and as casually answered. They may not have acquired an extensive technical vocabulary (although even in this direction much can be achieved), but they will have a fairly clear idea of the essential facts and — still more important — a healthy attitude towards them. The importance of getting the facts clear quite early on in life could scarcely be expressed better than in the words of a London schoolgirl, who wrote in an essay :

I think it is most essential for all children to know all the facts of reproduction, when they are about nine or ten years of age, because then they do not get silly ideas of these facts in their heads. If these are explained sensibly, children understand more plainly, and it helps them greatly when they grow up. Children also ought to be taught on the upbringing of children and how to explain things to the next generation. Then when they grow up they do not feel ignorant.

### THE SECONDARY<sup>1</sup> SCHOOL

By the time that children reach the secondary school,

<sup>1</sup> The phrase 'Secondary School' is used throughout this book in the sense of the 1944 Education Act, to include all types of school providing full-time education for children of eleven years and over.



## The School Curriculum

the prospect of a much fuller and richer sex education emerges. Intellectually, the pupils are capable of assimilating many new facts and of understanding many new ideas ; emotionally, they are beginning to gain some slight appreciation of the meaning of love between man and woman and between parent and child ; socially, they are developing greater awareness of themselves as individuals and of their place in the community as a whole. Very soon they will be undergoing fundamental and far-reaching bodily changes which, with their emotional accompaniments, will deeply affect the pupils' lives and outlooks and present them with many new problems. Side by side, therefore, they develop increased need for sex education and increased ability to profit from it. Thus while the teacher in the secondary school is faced with a very difficult task, he is presented with magnificent opportunities.

### BIOLOGY

It has been suggested above that in the junior school sex education should be almost exclusively incidental ; but for children of about eleven and upwards, formal sex instruction enters the field.

In so far as the facts of reproduction are concerned, the place for this is clearly the biology lesson. This was recognised by the London thirteen-year-old who wrote :

If people have no knowledge of biology they grow up rather narrow-minded and are shocked when later in life they are told the facts, which are really only natural and rather wonderful.

So far from there being any fundamental difficulty in including a study of sex in biology, it is quite impossible to teach biology adequately *without* teaching about sex and reproduction. Perhaps the most characteristic feature of living organisms is that they reproduce and in most cases reproduce sexually, and to ignore this fact is to remove both foundation and keystone from the biological building.



## Sex Education

Where the simple asexual fission of *Amoeba* is concerned, most teachers find no difficulty. The reproduction of earth-worm and frog is described with a fair degree of confidence (even if, in some cases, the actual process of mating is passed over rather hurriedly), but the internal fertilisation of birds and the copulation of mammals prove a stumbling block to many a pedagogue. Yet the difficulty is in the mind of the teacher, not in that of the pupil. If children have already been made familiar earlier in the course with the necessary minimum vocabulary and with the ideas of maleness and femaleness, of mating, of fertilisation and of embryonic development, they will accept quite naturally a simple account of avian and mammalian reproduction. They can be helped to understand the advantages of internal fertilisation and of uterine embryonic development, and may indeed be guided by the skilful teacher to suggest many of the facts themselves.

But the difficulty is that if *Homo sapiens* is placed in logical order in a biology scheme, our species will scarcely be reached even by the last year at school. And so it is in all too many cases. Starting with *Amoeba* and *Paramecium* and working gradually up the evolutionary scale, the frog is reached after a year or two, the bird a little later, and the mammal at the very end of the course, if at all. Oh that *Amoeba* had become extinct some millions of years ago — for then biologists would have been *forced* to think of some other way of starting their syllabuses !

There is a great deal to be said for abandoning this superficially logical simple-to-complex approach, and studying our own species quite early in the secondary school, at the age of about eleven years. Children of this age are interested in the way their bodies work — usually much more interested than they are in the complexities of the conjugation of *Paramecium*. It is not true, as is often suggested, that experimentation on the human body is impossible without elaborate laboratory apparatus and accommodation.



## The School Curriculum

Given a little glassware, some rubber tubing, a few simple reagents and a fair amount of ingenuity, experiments may be devised which can be carried out in any school, and a course in human physiology made most attractive. Into such a course, reproduction fits as naturally as digestion and it should be treated in the same matter-of-fact way. After dealing with glands such as those which produce saliva and tears and sweat and milk, a simple account of ductless glands may be introduced. From these and their action in bodily co-ordination, there is an easy transition to the action of the testes and ovaries as producers of endocrine secretions ; and then to their role as producers of sex cells, and so to the whole question of reproduction.

Such an early study of human physiology has definite advantages from the point of view of sex education. If the imparting of information about human reproduction is to achieve the dual object of rendering less alluring the more tainted sources of information and of avoiding emotional upset at the discovery of the ' facts of life ', it should be substantially completed by the age of twelve. To leave it later is to leave it too late. From the overheard conversation of adults or the gloating descriptions of their better-informed contemporaries, from secretly circulating book or from urinal epigraphy, most young people have picked up a good deal of information long before a heart-to-heart from parent or school-leavers' lecture from teacher lifts up a tiny corner of the veil. But in gathering this knowledge from gutter sources, they have picked up much palpable error and much gutter slime too. Things are difficult enough without our giving these unwholesome purveyors of information several years start over ourselves. Such early instruction has also the advantage of preparing the girl for the onset of menstruation and the boy for that of seminal emissions.

But perhaps even more important from the point of view of the teacher is the reaction of the children themselves. In a class of thirteen- or fourteen-year-olds there will be several



## Sex Education

children who are already developing an emotional interest in sex and who, if their previous education has not been of the best, feel rather uneasy about it. The atmosphere in such a class is not nearly so free from strain as it is among their juniors. Those who have dealt with this matter with children in their first year at the secondary school are unanimous in their view that at this earlier age the whole problem is taken by the children in a perfectly delightful, natural way — which is not always the case with older pupils.

It is important — and this is a thing that some of our more ardent but less thoughtful sex educationists are liable to forget — that not too much information be imparted. To most pre-adolescent children the sensual side of sex is almost meaningless. How can they appreciate the wonderful joy of intercourse between two lovers? They have, in most cases, scarcely begun to feel the sexual urge and sexual emotions, and the idea of intercourse as an expression of affection is liable to appear somewhat ludicrous. Which of us, indeed — to be quite honest — does not also feel that, considered in cold blood, copulation really is a rather astonishing procedure? With most younger school children, therefore, sex must be regarded mainly as a means to reproduction, and its amatory aspect barely touched on. These pre-adolescents are in search of reality — they want to know ‘how things work’. There will, it is true, be the occasional child and the occasional older class which demonstrates by its questions that it has some inkling of the emotions involved, and wishes to know more. In such cases, the wish should be met. A golden rule here, as in other realms of education, is to answer all questions honestly and to give details in so far as the children evince interest in them; but not to force down their throats ideas which seem to bore them or which they are emotionally incapable of comprehending.

Children of this age normally show great interest in, and can understand perfectly well, those physiological facts which need for their simple exposition the following vocabulary:



## The School Curriculum

// *ovum* (or egg), *sperm*, *ovary*, *testis* (or spermary), *oviduct* (or egg tube), *spermduct* (or sperm tube), *uterus* (or womb), *vagina*, *vulva*, *penis*, *copulation* (or mating or sexual intercourse or coition), *fertilisation*, *menstruation* (or monthly period), *seminal emission* (or night loss), *embryo*, *navel cord*, *placenta* (or afterbirth). // A very simple account may also be given of ductless glands, hormones, secondary sexual characters and the nature of adolescence. It will, of course, require all the skill of the teacher to estimate from the class's reaction just how far to go in explanation.

The description in class of the actual act of intercourse needs particular care. Especially in schools in congested areas, there will be some children who have actually witnessed copulation — either by their parents in overcrowded homes or by couples in dark alleys. They may not have understood at the time precisely what was happening, but the experience will have left its mark, and in some cases a severe scar. Other children may be sexually precocious — and sexual precocity is by no means always coincident with intellectual precocity — and may be unduly stimulated by excessive detail. A child of this age should know that the penis is inserted in the vagina, and may perhaps be told that the man and woman lie down close together, but any detailed account is quite out of the question. For classroom teaching, the very simplest account is all that is necessary.

But it is extraordinary how many teachers of biology avoid even so simple an explanation as this, and the position is reflected in (or perhaps reflects) the usual school biology text-books. A perusal of a large number of such books, including most of those at all widely used in secondary schools, yields some interesting results. In more than half there is no reference at all to human reproduction ; in less than a quarter is the fact of copulation mentioned ; and in scarcely any is there anything like adequate illustration of the human sex organs. Similarly, most series of wall diagrams for school use have one conspicuous omission — the



## Sex Education

chart of the human reproductive organs. And what intelligent child can fail to feel that there is something rather queer about the subject of sex, that books and charts should so go out of their way to avoid it ?

Yet it is essential that *sufficiently* detailed information should be imparted. Children to-day pick up so much sex knowledge at so early an age, from films, newspapers, magazines, shop windows and the conversation of their elders, that it is necessary for educators to be constantly on their guard against estimating the degree of instruction to be given in terms of what *they* would have wished to know at a corresponding age, perhaps twenty or thirty years ago. Otherwise there is the danger of telling children less than they know already — with serious results for the prestige of the instructor ! Occasionally, indeed, a knowledgeable member of the class may attempt to ' try out ' the teacher by making an unusually advanced enquiry — and the best procedure is often to outbid the questioner by giving a particularly frank reply.

If human reproduction is dealt with in the school biology course, it must receive the same unemotional treatment as other parts of the syllabus, and must be regarded as equally fit for discussion among the pupils themselves. Cases are not unknown of teachers giving talks on sex, and then being disconcerted because a little later on they hear a group of children discussing the same subject. And at a well-known grammar school in the north Midlands, the senior science master expressed concern because some lads in the library were seen to be examining with attention the section on reproduction in a famous lavishly illustrated popular biology book ! Care will naturally be taken by any teacher worthy of the name, that only suitable material is available in the school. But granted this precaution, there seems no reason why examination of texts, charts, models or museum specimens of the reproductive organs should be any more circumscribed or supervised than those of the ear or big toe.



## The School Curriculum

It is not only in lessons specifically on reproduction that biology may be used as a medium of sex education. When biological matters such as parasitism are being discussed, the dependence of the developing seed on the parent flowering plant provides as good an example as that of mistletoe on an apple tree ; and that of mammalian foetus on mother as good as that of tapeworm on pig. And in the case of the foetus, the parasitic state is particularly well exemplified, since the mother provides not only food, but also oxygen and outlet for excreted material.

These three aspects may also be mentioned — quite casually — when dealing with human nutrition, respiration and excretion respectively. This is not to direct special attention to sex and to lose all sense of perspective. It is to be guided by biological principle rather than by bigoted prudishness. What teacher, treating of the nutrition of the bluebottle, would fail to mention that of the gentle ? Or treating of respiration in the frog, forget the tadpole's gills ? Then why should mammals be specially selected for studied neglect of the changing physiological processes in the course of their development ? In little or none of this treatment need the word ' sex ' so much as appear — but it is all a vital part of sex education.

Similarly lessons upon the nervous system, which all too often consist of over-facile analogy with telephone systems, and among advanced pupils of over-detailed memorisation of reflex paths, may be made much more living and real, by treating of the processes of habit formation, of learning (and forgetting !), of the development of self-control and so on. All this may seem to have little enough to do with sex — but it is of importance that pupils should learn something of the uniqueness of humans as well as of their commonplaceness. The processes of human reproduction being so much on a par with those of a rabbit, it is as well that children should understand that our incomparably higher nervous development makes it possible, just as an incomparably higher social



## Sex Education

development makes it desirable, that our sexual behaviour be not entirely rabbit-like. Not too much must be claimed for such instruction. It *may* not have a great deal of effect on the pupil's subsequent behaviour, but at least it makes injunctions to self-control appear a little more reasonable.

The subject of heredity is not one which can be dealt with in any great detail in most school biology courses, but the main outlines of Mendel's discoveries and of their explanation in terms of chromosomes and genes should certainly be included in all secondary schools. This will involve an understanding of the reproductive process, not only in Mendel's garden peas, but also in other plants and in animals too. Such teaching, to be of the maximum interest and value, should include reference to the economic importance of breeding, and also to heredity in humans. It is not true, as is often suggested, that virtually nothing is known about this latter. Although controlled breeding of humans is not feasible, the wealth of statistical data available provides considerable compensation, and more is known about the genetics of *Homo sapiens* than about that of many other species. It is not necessary (nor is it desirable in the school) to utilise such knowledge in order to carry out eugenic propaganda. The mere knowledge of the facts will lead any normally inquisitive class (and how very inquisitive that is !) to make all sorts of suggestions about the desirability of medical examination before marriage, the undesirability of close inbreeding and so on. Indeed, it is usually necessary for the teacher to put the other side of the case, and make it clear to the pupils that principles other than those of genetics are involved in settling upon a wedding ! But such discussions, at a level appropriate to the particular class, will do a great deal to help towards a sane and healthy attitude to marriage and parenthood.



# The School Curriculum

## PHYSIOLOGY AND HYGIENE

In many schools the absence of laboratory accommodation or of a qualified teacher renders impossible the immediate establishment of a full biology course. But usually it will be possible to arrange at least a one-year course on human physiology. Any teacher with sufficient interest can acquire quite quickly the necessary minimum of knowledge, and there will often be at least one on the school staff who has a flying-start in the form of a fairly good training in first-aid. It is important that home study should be based on really reliable text-books, and not on one of the enormous number of semi-popular and only semi-accurate books which have been placed on the market in recent years. It is essential too, that *physiology* and not merely anatomy be studied. If there is one activity which provides an even more powerful mental opiate than the learning of those lists of dates which used to be called history, it is the memorisation of those minutiae of bodily structure which still too often masquerades as biology. Finally, it is important that teachers should become familiar with a range of simple experiments which will enable their teaching to be scientific and not merely didactic.

In many (and particularly girls') schools, the curriculum includes what is often called 'hygiene'. It is difficult to avoid the conclusion that this name often cloaks the impartation of health rules of doubtful validity, reinforced by arguments of negligible strength. But the scene is changing rapidly. Their accentuated interest in health education is leading many teachers to examine their syllabuses critically, and to sort out the biological fact from the bewhiskered myth. It is, moreover, leading many of them to explore the possibilities of sex education through the hygiene lesson.

There is little new to say under this head, for most of what has been said about biology as a medium of sex education applies equally whether it is taught as a separate subject



## Sex Education

in its own right, or as part of a scheme of general science, or whether certain aspects of it are dealt with under such headings as physiology or hygiene. But whatever the particular scheme of instruction, it is doubtful whether as much advantage will ultimately accrue from the facts learned as from the impression gained, by many pupils for the first time, that sex and reproduction are matters that can be discussed openly in the classroom, in plain and straightforward language, without smirks and sniggers and equally without hypocritical hyper-rectitude or 'pi-jaw'.

### THE VENEREAL DISEASES

A matter needing some attention is the place that should be given to the venereal diseases in sex education. Clearly there is a place, particularly in the education of older adolescents and adults ; but here it is the school child that is particularly being considered. The subject cannot be merely ignored, for in these days of widespread poster and press and radio publicity, most older pupils will have heard of the venereal diseases, and providing that there is (as surely there should be) a quiet confidence that all questions may be asked of the teacher, queries are sure to be made. Since boycotting is impossible, it becomes important to consider the best way of dealing with the matter.

What is certain is that 'sex education' must no longer be, as it has for too long been in certain circles, a mere euphemism for dilation on the horrors of syphilis and gonorrhoea. If one of the main aims of sex education is that people should grow up with the idea that sex is something fine and clean and wholesome, it is suicidal for children's early lessons on the subject to deal with genital pathology. Unless the matter is raised in questions therefore, it is best for the matter of venereal diseases to be excluded completely from school lessons on reproduction.

This does not, however, imply total neglect. Most bio-



## The School Curriculum

logy courses include (and those which do not, should) some account of micro-organisms and their ways of life. Since for many species the way of life is parasitism on humans, as a result of which the host shows pathological reactions, the study of microbial disease fits naturally into the school biology course. Clearly no morbid details are wanted — but an outline of the commoner infections, their causative organisms, methods of spread, and the measures which can be taken to combat them, adds interest to lessons which may otherwise tend to become somewhat arid and dull. And if in a discussion on bacteria it is mentioned that some attack the throat and cause diphtheria, there seems no good reason why it may not be stated that others attack the sex organs and cause gonorrhoea ; while the mention of the effect of one protozoon in producing malaria may well be accompanied by that of the effect of another in causing syphilis. Dealt with in this way, as one of the many manifestations of the activities of micro-organisms, the venereal diseases may be dealt with in the school without tarnishing the teaching on reproduction.

But one word of caution. The teacher who adopts this course must be very certain of the facts. Probably about very few subjects are there more fabulous stories still current than about the venereal diseases. Children will have heard many of these stories, and their questions will be searching ones. It will be well to be prepared for them as far as possible, and to have found out in advance the correct answers.

### VISITING LECTURERS

It is necessary to say a little about the not uncommon practice of inviting itinerant specialists to the school to give *ad hoc* talks on sex. This procedure has the one undoubted advantage that these teachers *are* specialists, and by virtue of their expert knowledge and extensive experience they will usually, other things being equal, give better lessons than



the ordinary teacher, who has necessarily not been able to give the same time, care and experience to the perfection of technique. But unfortunately other things normally are not equal. The visit of a specialist, with the usual accompanying derangement of regular class arrangements, circularising of parents, gathering together of several forms or even of children from several schools — and sometimes quite fatal 'introductory remarks' by the head teacher — makes for most unfavourable conditions; and it is a great tribute to the excellence of those few people engaged in this work, that normally they manage to present the subject in such a manner as to bring forth praise from all sides. But the experimental stage is now passing, and the consensus of opinion, even among the itinerants themselves, is that the time has arrived for their task to be taken over by the normal staffs of the schools.

But if a school has no biologist on its staff and if no other teacher feels prepared to take on at once the task of imparting sex instruction, lessons by a visitor are better than no lessons at all. Often moreover, after teachers on the staff have heard the specialist on one or two occasions and have picked up some hints on methods of presentation and seen for themselves how natural, and indeed delightful, the atmosphere is in the classroom throughout, they decide that they will dispense with the services of the visiting teacher and take on the job themselves. Thus as a short-term policy for meeting immediate needs and in the hope that their example will help and encourage the regular staff to proceed, a good deal can be said for the employment of itinerant specialists. But as a permanent policy, or as an excuse for the regular staff to avoid their own responsibility, little or nothing can be said for it. This, however, is not to deny that there will always be a value in talks by specialist visitors on various related topics that cannot be fitted in to the ordinary lessons or will add interest or variety to the school work.



# The School Curriculum

## DOMESTIC SCIENCE AND HOMECRAFT

In some girls' schools, the only education for home-making is a rather narrow course under the name of 'domestic science', which often gives the impression of being designed not so much to help the girls themselves when they become wives and mothers, as to provide a supply of reasonably efficient domestic servants for the favoured few who can afford them. But in a democracy we cannot be content with this. Many teachers have already altered the content and the method of their teaching, so that the girls learn not how to become kitchen maids and laundry workers, but how to run a home of their own. Often enough the old name 'domestic science' is retained, but in other cases the new width and new vision is acknowledged by giving the course a new name. Sometimes the special aspect of baby-care is separately designated as 'mothercraft' and other special aspects of home management given distinctive titles. But the business of running a home successfully is a unity, and it may help to remind both teacher and pupil of this if the relevant studies are given some generalised name such as 'homecraft'.

A course in homecraft can be of the greatest value in sex education, especially in dealing with those aspects other than the purely copulatory by which humans are distinguished from some beasts of the field. A knowledge of the biological process of reproduction is not complete without some consideration of the care of the mother during pregnancy and of the baby after birth, and lessons in homecraft provide the place for such teaching. The proper care of children involves not merely preparing their meals and layettes and washing their necks and napkins, but also understanding something of their physical, intellectual and emotional development; while a home is best considered not in isolation, but as an integral part of a society which has claims upon it as well as duties towards it. Thus there arise in the home-



## Sex Education

craft course opportunities for dealing with many matters of the greatest import in the development of a sense of the value of family life and of the responsibilities of a couple towards society. Unfortunately the whole matter is be-devilled, as is so much of our education, by the very early age at which our children are thrown out from school into a competitive society. Much of what is suggested here is suited only to older pupils — one more argument, if another be needed, for a considerable elevation of the school-leaving age.

In reflection of the sex cleavage of our society, teaching of this sort has in the past been confined almost entirely to girls. It seems to have been assumed that girls did not need to know about simple carpentry and electric bells, and that boys might reasonably be left in ignorance of how to sew on a button or boil an egg. Now, however, with the increasing economic emancipation of woman and the increasing acceptance of domestic responsibility by man, school curricula are changing. If lessons in mothercraft are needed for the girls, lessons in fathercraft are needed for the boys, and best of all, a generalised course in homecraft should be available to them both. In this way, attitudes towards sex and marriage can be linked up with the idea of a happy and orderly home life.

The 'family life' theme should indeed be an element of sex education at all stages. The very youngest children love to mother their dolls, and this interest is not confined to girls. When animal pets are kept in the junior school, their family life is naturally observed. At a later stage, girls develop a real tenderness towards babies, and unless their attitude has been distorted by unhappy experiences, look forward to the day when they will have their own. This was certainly the view of a fifteen-year-old Northumberland schoolgirl, who actually criticised a sex education film along these lines: "I found no fault with the film except on one small matter. This is to say, it was extremely straightforward and practical.



## The School Curriculum

It was in fact, to my mind, too much 'matter-of-fact' style. It was not at all on the personal or the emotional side. I think films of this type should show more pictures of little babies and make people, especially girls, love them and not just take them as a matter of course."

Incidentally, this common assumption that the feeling of tenderness and affection for babies is something innate in females and not in males, is shaken by the fact that in some societies precisely the reverse appears to occur. Among the Manus of New Guinea the father plays a major part in the rearing of children, and when statues were introduced from a neighbouring tribe, it was the boys rather than the girls who treated them as dolls and lavished attention on them.

### PHYSICAL EDUCATION

The possibility of sex education through the sciences is a fairly obvious one, but other subjects are no less important. To a certain extent they may be utilised to give factual information of a historical, geographical, sociological or anthropological nature — information which is necessary to an understanding of the customs and *mores* of our society. To a greater extent they may provide opportunities for dealing with matters of sexual belief and behaviour in a way which will encourage the pupils to develop healthy attitudes. Here is a fertile field for study. Biologists have devoted fairly careful consideration to the potentialities of their subject as a medium of sex education, but in Great Britain very little thought has been given to the matter by specialists in other subjects. Since it is clearly impossible for a man of science to speak with authority upon matters of which he has no special knowledge, the suggestions made below must be regarded merely as first tentative guide lines, to be erased or blacked in as those with greater knowledge and experience may decide.

An important place in any well-balanced scheme of sex



## Sex Education

education is occupied by the physical training specialist. Increasingly in schools, the phrase 'physical training' is being replaced by 'physical education', and this is a hopeful sign. It implies that those specially responsible for the physical fitness of the pupils have appreciated that much more is needed than mere muscular development. We are peculiar animals in many ways, and one of our peculiarities is the close interdependence of body and mind and what for want of a better word must be described as 'soul'. Here is the reason for the key position of physical education in a programme of sex education. By taking part in individual activities children learn the value and the joy of self-assertion, by taking part in team activities they learn the need for the subordination of the self to the group. All this is part of general character formation, and therefore is of considerable significance for sex education.

The teacher of physical training has other opportunities too. Often the periodical medical examination of the pupils takes place in consultation with the physical educationist, and there is obvious scope for both teacher and doctor to have personal chats with the children — chats which may be most helpful to the adolescent and most illuminating to the adult. Moreover, the esteem in which 'P.T.' teachers are usually held by pupils will give added weight to their words.

In so far as formal instruction is concerned, lessons in physical education have great possibilities. If, for example, the practical exercise of the body is linked up with simple physiological explanation — perhaps talks of only five minutes' duration at a time — it is possible to deal quite naturally on occasion with special problems such as menstruation, seminal emission and masturbation. The first approach to these matters should clearly be in the biology lessons, but certain aspects are better dealt with in other ways. In the case of menstruation, for example, the physiological significance of the cycle fits quite naturally into a biology course; but to treat all the details of menstrual



## The School Curriculum

hygiene, of the correct attitudes to bathing, physical exercise and so on, is to overload the biology lesson with material of a sexual nature. Similarly, while it may reasonably be explained that the activity of the testes and their accessory glands will normally lead to seminal emission, and that sexual feelings may lead to masturbation in both sexes, it is difficult to deal with these matters in lessons on biology in the detail they deserve. But where the biologist and the physical educationist plan their work in collaboration, it should not be difficult for the latter to expand the explanations of the former and to deal with the more personal problems involved. This does not mean that this division of scope is always the right one. Everything depends on the personalities of the teachers involved, and in some cases it might be quite undesirable for the physical educationist to play any part in sex education at all, just as in other cases the biologist might be totally unsuited. But personalities apart, this would appear to be a reasonable arrangement.

### MIXED SCHOOLS

In co-educational schools it is particularly desirable that the potentialities of physical education should be exploited. There is certainly nothing in the nature of the subject (although there may be in the inhibitions of the teacher) to prevent the presentation in mixed classes of the simple physiology of menstruation and seminal emission. It is, indeed, very desirable that each sex should understand what happens in the other. There may then be a greater appreciation by the young men of the future, of the personal problems of their young women; and a greater understanding by the next generation of mothers, of the difficulties of their adolescent sons. But this is a different matter from going into elaborate detail about the hygiene of menstruation before boys and about the problems of masturbation before girls.

For one thing, it is probably best to emphasise to girls



## Sex Education

that they should avoid any tendency to make martyrs of themselves during the menstrual period, so that it becomes the 'curse' of common parlance, and that they should endeavour to carry on with normal activities; but it must not be forgotten that menstruation is a nuisance, and in some cases is accompanied by discomfort and pain, so that it is well for boys to be asked to show extra consideration to girls at this time. Here is a real problem if all instruction is given in mixed classes — how to induce feelings of kindly consideration in the boys without inducing those of self-pity in the girls. Girls also commonly have an emotional attitude to the blood of the menses which it is difficult for boys to appreciate.

There are similar difficulties where masturbation is concerned. No sex education of boys can be considered worthy of the name if this problem is not dealt with at some length. Virtually all men have at some time or another been addicted to the habit and have been very worried about it, and it should be a major object of those who have to deal with adolescent boys, to reassure them by exploding the monstrous myths which still circulate on the subject. But where girls are concerned, things are different. Some investigators, it is true, assure us that masturbation is as widespread among females as among males. But even assuming that they are right (as they may well be on technical grounds, if the word 'masturbation' is used to include all forms of sexual auto-stimulation), there is not the same emotional problem involved. Much of what is called 'masturbation' in girls is a mere semi-conscious stimulation of labia and clitoris by means of leg movements and does not imply the same deliberate decision to achieve self-satisfaction as it does in adolescent boys. And even where the auto-stimulation is conscious and deliberate, the climax is not of the same unaesthetic nature as that of the male, and is not likely to leave the same post-masturbatory feelings of disgust and shame. Whatever the percentage of girls who technically



## The School Curriculum

masturbate, and whether or not it is as high as that of boys, there is certainly not the same tangled net of emotions of desire, fear, exhilaration, disgust and self-condemnation. All this makes it rather difficult to deal adequately with boys' problems in a mixed class and makes it doubtful whether girls may not have their interest in the matter unduly stimulated if there is a great deal of discussion about it in their presence.

Ideally, it is true, nearly all information should be capable of presentation to mixed classes, and the exceptional teacher may well be able to attain to the ideal ; but many teachers would find difficulty in doing so. It may therefore seem to be desirable, in a mixed school, that certain aspects of sex education should be presented to the two sexes separately. But it would be a catastrophe if the pupils were to feel that they were being specially segregated, since in their comparative ignorance of the pedagogic problems involved, they would be almost certain to read something sinister into the segregation. This was certainly the reaction in a Northumberland grammar school, a pupil of which, suggesting that in future sex instruction classes should be mixed, reported :

This is a general opinion, brought forward by some of the VIth Form boys and unanimously approved by the remainder of the VIth. Certainly it would get rid of the ' Well, what did they tell you ? ' business by non-separation of boys and girls. Immediately the boys had had their lecture, the VIth retired to the Library and held a long and perfectly sensible discussion on the subject, and we all agreed that it is rather a pointless rule, to separate boys and girls. Indeed to separate the sexes seems to be defeating the very end at which the films and talks are aiming ; if boys and girls are shown and told the same things, why show and tell them separately ?

That is why physical education lessons are particularly convenient, because for them the pupils are normally already separated, boys in one group and girls in another, and no suspicion of ulterior motive will arise in their minds.



# Sex Education

## HISTORY

If it be agreed that sex education, so far from being a matter that can be dealt with as an isolated topic or as part of a single school subject, has aspects that can best be illuminated by many different studies, it is important to give some consideration to the potentialities of those subjects which are not always realised to have an important contribution to make.

So long as the teaching of history was dominated by the necessity of learning lists of kings and battles with their relevant dates, this subject could scarcely be utilised as a means of sex education. But to-day the position is vastly different. History is now treated in most schools as a cultural subject, in which the wide sweep of events is not obscured by the pettifogging details of royal genealogy (although even these may provide the opportunity to discuss the principles of heredity!).

Particularly interesting is the question of the evolution of the family, and the way in which domestic relationships, and especially the role of the woman, have varied at different historical periods. The early organisation of society in *gentes* can well be described in quite elementary lessons, and children love to trace its remnants in the clans of to-day. Lessons on the 'Red Indians' are always very popular, and an outline of the social organisation of the Iroquois would do much to give pupils that breadth of vision of human relationships which forms the basis of tolerance and understanding. But without even crossing the Atlantic, much can be learned from the early history of these islands. It is not difficult for children to see that the conditions which produced the warrior queen Boadicea must have been vastly different from those of succeeding centuries, when with changing economic and social conditions women were forced into subservience.

Classical history offers particularly instructive material



## The School Curriculum

for tracing changes in family relationships. The story of how, from the comparative freedom of earlier days, the women of Rome became mere pieces of property in the ownership of their fathers or their husbands and then once again achieved some independence ; of how the overthrow of Rome by the ' barbarians ' from the north led to further changes in their status ; of how in Greece the place of women in society varied in different times and different regions — all this can be introduced into ordinary history lessons without in any way distorting them. Similarly, coming to later times, family and sex relationships can be traced through the Dark Ages, the Renaissance and the Reformation ; through the days of maritime expansion and of industrial revolution ; through periods of puritanism and of license ; and to recent times when mass unemployment has led, particularly in America, to large-scale migration, with its return to nomadic standards of sexual behaviour and family life. Finally, very recent history gives, in the growth of fascism and of communism, two extreme examples of the effects of social, economic and political trends upon the relations between the sexes.

It should also be possible to base valuable lessons on the development of the public health services, maternity and child welfare clinics and so on ; while a consideration of population changes in the past and of population trends at present provide interesting material for older pupils.

These are, of course, merely illustrations. None but the individual teacher, knowing the individual children and the individual school, can decide just how and when history lessons may be utilised as vehicles of sex education. But there are clearly great possibilities here, just waiting to be exploited.

### GEOGRAPHY

Similar possibilities lie in the study of geography. This subject is usually taught to-day with much less emphasis on



## Sex Education

its physiographic aspects and much more on its human side than was previously the case, and this opens up all sorts of avenues. A description of the purdah system and the child marriages of India may lead on to a discussion of the emancipation of women and the responsibilities of marriage ; a study of Mohammedan peoples provides the opportunity to point out the disadvantages of polygamy ; modern Turkey and Russia show how women can throw aside their traditional restraints and take their full share in the life of the community. Whatever part of the world is being studied, whether it be the Congo or the Nile or the Ganges or the Thames, there is a wealth of illustration in the interrelations of social customs, economic structure, religious creed, family life, community health and sex conventions. Here, as elsewhere in sex education, a sense of proportion is needed. Lessons on human geography must not be transformed into discourses on sexual anthropology. But gradually and inconspicuously, pupils can be provided with information which will help them to examine our own sex conventions impartially, and to make their judgments with the tolerance that comes from catholic knowledge, but without the spinelessness that comes from the absence of all standards.

So far as local geography is concerned, there are obvious potentialities. A survey of local housing conditions and of communal services such as maternity homes, ante- and post-natal clinics, child welfare clinics, nursery schools, crèches, etc., will provide material for much interesting and valuable education ; and no doubt the geography specialist will be able to think of many other such topics.

## CIVICS AND ECONOMICS

Increasingly in school curricula, lessons on civics or citizenship are finding a place. When they are not narrowed down merely to the personal problem of career-probing, such lessons can be very valuable in sex education. Where the



## The School Curriculum

local community is being studied, the subject-matter verges on local geography and history, and the same considerations about visits to clinics, hospitals, welfare centres and the like apply. In examining museums and libraries, their role in extending the cultural interests of the home can be emphasised ; in considering courts of law with their evidence of social failure, the importance of sound heredity, of a good home life, of a healthy atmosphere in society, need stressing.

But even where the interest is mainly in future careers, much can be done. Which occupations are usually considered ' men's jobs ' and which ' women's jobs ' ? And why ? To what extent does the distinction depend upon valid biological difference, and to what extent upon mere social prejudice ? And how, for men as well as for women, are the demands of a career to be reconciled with the needs of the home ?

In lessons on economics, there are obvious possibilities. A study of home budgets and wages raises the whole question of family allowances, while deeper examination of the sources of real wealth raises interesting problems of the size and the age-distribution of the population, and hence of birth- and death-rates. With older pupils at any rate, discussion on these problems will provide a very useful opportunity for the wider aspects of sex education.

### ENGLISH

It has often been suggested that English should be regarded not as a separate school subject, but as an all-pervading stream which should fertilise and be in turn enriched by every other subject in the curriculum. Much the same might be said of sex education, and few studies can gain so much from it, or give so generously in return, as that of English. Much great literature of all ages has a sexual content or a sexual inspiration, and cannot be fully appreciated by those who have no understanding of sex. On the other hand, precisely because of this sexual content and inspiration, the study of literature presents many possibilities



## Sex Education

for the development of a rich and humane appreciation of the social and spiritual flowering of sex.

Of recent years, the school teaching of this subject has become much less a matter of grammar and syntax and much more one of literary enjoyment and appreciation. The best teachers make a real effort to help their pupils to gain some understanding of the motives and feelings of the characters in novels and plays as well as of the construction of the plot. They present poetry not merely as a compound of spondees, trochees and dactyls, but as an expression of deeply felt emotions. And lying as it does at the root of so many motives, and providing as it does the deep fount-head of so much emotion, sex cannot be excluded from such teaching without rendering it somewhat sterile and arid.

This does not mean that when young children learn the jingle 'I wish I had a husband, no bigger than my thumb', they should be given a discourse upon the phallic interpretation of nursery rhymes. It needs mature wisdom and careful consideration to decide when and to what extent the sexual implications of a literary piece should be dealt with. This will clearly depend upon the age of the pupils, the extent of their physiological knowledge, their degree of emotional maturity and many other factors. Only the individual teacher, with an intimate knowledge and understanding of the individual pupils, can decide exactly what should be done in each specific case. But it is possible to formulate general principles, and one of these is that the study of literature can and should be utilised as a medium of sex education.

It is important to realise that whether or not the teacher so wishes, children *are* receiving sex guidance from their reading. Unfortunately it is often guidance of a most undesirable nature. Much of the popular light literature pouring out from the presses presents love either as something lurid and sordid, or what is perhaps even more damaging in more subtle ways, as something magical and divorced from real life, manifesting itself to perfection only on the palm-



## The School Curriculum

dotted shores of coral isles. Merely to condemn such literature is useless. It is read so widely because people *like* reading it, and the fact that the teacher calls it 'rubbish' merely proves to many pupils what they had already suspected — namely, that the teacher is an old fogey. Would it not be better, if members of a class are known to indulge such a taste, to spend a few lessons reading the stories in school and getting the class to discuss them? Children will not improve their taste merely by being *told* that it is bad — but they may do so if shown *why* it is bad. But if a girl has a passion for tales of sheiks and sun-tanned he-men, it is not much use to try to persuade her to read the Waverley Novels in her spare time. She will need much wiser weaning than that. The best hope is to introduce her to some of the great love stories of literature — and if that involves her reading occasional unexpurgated editions, is it not better that she should learn something of sex as it really is, in all its grandeur and passion and tragedy, than that she should feed for ever on the mushy pabulum of the twopenny weeklies?

Probably few readers of this page, casting their minds back to their schooldays, cannot remember occasions upon which their teachers skipped certain paragraphs or passed hastily over certain passages — and if, greatly daring, a pupil asked an inconvenient question, either refused to answer it or else gave a reply so patently evasive that a refusal would almost have been preferable. Here is sex education through literature, with a vengeance! Education that sex is something that should be pushed aside, something not to be discussed openly, something about which questions should not be asked. But something which inconveniently keeps obtruding itself upon literature, because literature is a mirror held to life.

There may be difficulties in making literature a medium of positive sex education — but the alternative is not, as is often fondly imagined, one of featureless neutrality. The



## Sex Education

alternative is the encouragement of emotional immaturity, morbid fear or prurient curiosity.

### RELIGIOUS INSTRUCTION

It is often claimed that sex education can be of little value unless it is based on Christian belief. One's attitude to this claim depends upon one's religious or philosophical convictions ; but even those who are themselves devout Christians will not deny that excellent attitudes to sex and excellent sex behaviour may be found among that great majority of people who are Jews, Hindus, Buddhists, Mohammedans, Confucians, and even atheists or agnostics. So far as Great Britain is concerned, however, it is clear that the whole ethic of our society has been deeply influenced by Christianity, and few children can pass through school without receiving some religious instruction. The precise degrees of emphasis to be placed upon different virtues and different vices is a matter of individual opinion ; but most people of goodwill can find considerable common ground in this matter, and will appreciate that religious teaching can contribute a good deal to sex education.

Many children obtain some of their earliest ideas about sex from their Bible reading, and it is clear that the way in which this matter is dealt with in the school may have a great effect upon the attitude which the pupils develop to sex. If, as all too often happens, verses containing the word 'womb' are rapidly skipped over, the children are bound to be left with a feeling that there is something peculiar about the word. And if, as is often the case, one of the more knowledgeable members of the class offers after the lesson is over to inform the others a little more fully upon the significance of the word, we may be sure that the offer will be accepted with alacrity. Not only will the children thus be likely to receive garbled information, but they will also (quite rightly) feel that their teacher is in some way afraid of the facts of sex.



## The School Curriculum

This fear, which is a very real thing in the case of many adults, also shows itself in the attitude to other words which are come across in the Bible. For example, the word 'circumcision' is bound to be met sooner or later, and any normally intelligent class of children will very rightly wish to know what it means. It is surely a simple enough matter for the teacher to explain that circumcision is a small operation of cutting the foreskin, to give some idea of its hygienic value in hot climates and in some cases in our own, and to show how the custom has acquired a religious significance. All this assumes, of course, that the children are already familiar with the elementary anatomy of the genital organs. In this, as in all other aspects of sex education, the knowledge of the central physiological and anatomical facts is the foundation stone. It ought to be possible for the teachers of all other subjects to assume that by the time the children in their classes have reached the age of twelve years, sex is no longer a closed book to them. The first pages, indeed, should have been read many years before. The teacher of scripture who does not wish conspicuously to avoid certain verses because of the sexual content of their vocabulary, should not find it necessary to sidetrack the lesson into one on physiology, because the biologist has failed to deal with the matter adequately in the proper place.

Every child reads about Solomon and his many wives and concubines, but how many are left with any understanding of the meaning of what they read? (Except perhaps with a vague idea that concubines are related to Solomon in a somewhat similar way to his wives, but that there is something peculiar about the relationship, since teacher so obviously does not welcome questions about it!) What child fails to evince curiosity about such words as 'eunuch', 'adultery' and the like? That the children are keen to clear up such points is evidenced by a Kent headmistress, who writes:

Incidentally, when I recently had a 'Question Box' in Scripture lesson with girls of 12-14 . . . a great majority of enquiries



## Sex Education

were on marriage, birth, divorce, etc., *e.g.* :

What does it mean : conceived by the Holy Ghost ?

Why are people married ?

How is a baby born ?

Do you think people ought to get divorced if their children are happy ?

Such questions *must* be answered.

A great deal of Bible reading, especially that of the Old Testament, is virtually history and geography under another guise. The same possibilities, therefore, exist here as have already been pointed out. The changing nature of the family, the alterations in the status of women — these and many other social relationships can well be illustrated from scripture. As they read the New Testament, the charity of Jesus will find a warm echo in the hearts of most young people, and is worth emphasising as a counter-balance to the hard intolerance of many of His and of our contemporaries.

With the older pupils, religious education offers special possibilities. In a Middlesex girls' secondary school, the sixth-form pupils devoted the major part of one term's religious instruction periods to a discussion of the Sermon on the Mount and its applicability to modern times. Inevitably adultery and the whole question of sex relations were dealt with, and the many and complicated considerations involved were discussed. The headmistress who led the discussions is convinced of their value, and feels sure that as a result of them the girls are now better equipped to make rational decisions about their own sex behaviour.

This is but one example of the way in which a good teacher can help pupils to establish morals that are worthy of the name — morals founded not on automatic subservience to rule, but on clear-eyed contemplation of life as it is. The good teacher will find many other possibilities too. It scarcely needs repeating, of course, that while sex and its implications should not be glossed over in religious educa-



# The School Curriculum

tion, neither should they be over-emphasised or dragged in willy-nilly on every possible occasion.

## MATHEMATICS

To suggest that even mathematics may be utilised as a medium of sex education might appear at first sight a *reductio ad absurdum*, but it is in fact a perfectly serious suggestion. At appropriate levels throughout school life there may be introduced inconspicuously into the arithmetic and other mathematical lessons, problems and examples which bear on family and social relationships, and to do so is to give human interest to what otherwise may tend to be mere mechanical repetition.

An important aspect of the relations within a family is the economic one, and an understanding of this may be very helpful. Family finances may be worked out — with the younger pupils perhaps merely in the form of shopping lists, but with the older ones complete budgets for families of various sizes. Problems on income tax may well lead on to discussions about the desirability of family allowances and about the degree of economic independence of the wife — or at least provide the factual background for discussions in other lessons.

Similarly exercises on geometrical progression may be given added reality if they refer not to abstract series, but to the rate of increase of actual living creatures. Ranging from the prolific fly to the slow-breeding elephant, from bacteria to great redwood trees, examples of geometrical increase in population may be worked out from the known mean period of attainment of maturity and the known mean number of progeny. And since the results obtained clearly do not obtain in Nature, the way is open for a discussion of all those factors which limit population. And when graphs are being studied, is there any reason why they should not be based on the vital statistics of birth-rates, death-rates; infantile



## Sex Education

mortality rates and population trends ?

By the use of coins and coloured beads and packs of playing cards, many problems in heredity can be worked out and the solutions to them are of deep interest to children. No doubt there are other possibilities too, but it would need a mathematician to explore them.

### OUTSIDE THE CLASSROOM

When all the possibilities of the ordinary lesson have been exhausted, there is still a great deal that can be done in the school. Visits to farms, zoological gardens, kennels, fish hatcheries and so on — and in the case of older pupils (and why should this be confined to girls ?) to day nurseries, nursery schools and infant welfare clinics, will give added reality to their lessons.

With brighter pupils a great deal of valuable sex education can be carried out by means of class debates and discussions, and short papers by the pupils. Clearly this applies mainly to the upper forms, and most of all to the sixth forms of grammar schools. Here it is possible to deal with such subjects as marriage, child welfare, boy and girl friendships, and problems of behaviour in general. By encouraging the pupils to express their views, they can be helped to clarify them. By allowing them to hear conflicting opinions, they can be helped to make up their own minds on a rational basis. Such pupils are virtually young adults, and if we are to retain their respect, we must treat them as such.

But in no school worthy of the name does all education cease with the bell that sounds the end of the last lesson of the day. The school which is a hive of activity out of class hours is usually the school which has the greatest success in character building. Field clubs, debating societies, first-aid clubs, junior farm clubs, film clubs, community service squads — these are but a few of the organised activities which can lead either to the acquisition of further knowledge



## The School Curriculum

or to the widening of interests and the strengthening of character. At week-ends and in vacations the arrangement of swimming parties, rambles and camps is of value. So indeed are all healthy activities.

In this type of extra-curricular sex education, co-educational schools have an enormous advantage. It may not be a conclusive argument in their favour that boys and girls are not normally born to distinct families ; but when to this is added the fact that as adults they will share their lives as man and wife together, the balance is at least heavily tilted. Mixed schools may have their extra problems, but they also have their extra potentialities. In sharing together day by day the life of a small community, boys and girls learn to understand each other and to tolerate differences of method and approach. They learn how to conduct relations between the sexes by conducting them.

But whether schools be mixed or not, the pupils' attitudes to the other sex can be deeply influenced by all sorts of small matters. When school lunches are being prepared, are the boys accustomed to take part in the work, or are they led to feel that ' that's a girls' job ' ? Is any sign of weakness in a boy met with the comment ' Don't be a girl ' or ' Only a girl acts like that ' ? Or are boys and girls brought up without any feeling of contempt or hostility towards the other sex ? These may seem trivial matters, but their influence is subtle and long-lasting.

### NEED FOR FURTHER STUDY

From what precedes, it is clear that sex education is not to be crabbed and confined within the limits of one subject of the curriculum. Not only biology, hygiene and the like which might be expected to serve in this connection ; but also literature, geography, scripture study and other subjects and activities, at first sight quite unconnected with sex, may all be made to play their part. Full recognition of the fact



## Sex Education

that sex education is not merely telling the ' facts of life ', but is part of the general process of character building, will make it clear that the whole school curriculum, and indeed the whole school life, are involved.

All these suggestions for sex education through the school curriculum and outside the classroom are purely tentative. The serious study of sex education in Great Britain has been so neglected that it is difficult to make with confidence many assertions which are not truisms. But if those who teach the different subjects will give careful thought to the possibilities and follow it with wise experiment, the purpose of this chapter will have been realised.



## Chapter Five

# Sex Problems in the School

The character of the school depends, not only upon the moral level of its pupils, but above all upon the moral level and the personal influence of the head of the school and the assistant teachers.

ALBERT MOLL

### IMPORTANCE OF SCHOOL ATMOSPHERE

WHEN the school has done its all in the imparting of the biological facts of sex and has utilised both lesson and extra-curricular activity to help in their social interpretation, much still remains to be achieved. The main aim of sex education is the influencing of attitudes and behaviour, and this is a more difficult matter.

About the importance of the task there can be no doubt. Many teachers must have shared the experience of one who stated :

When I began teaching some fifteen years ago, I did not believe there was any sex problem among schoolboys, or I thought that if there was such a problem it was neither grave nor urgent enough to call for any special help from a teacher. Since then I have gone about with boys ; I have listened to their more or less familiar conversations ; I have seen the sort of books they read if they get half a chance ; and I have noted their reactions to the naked human body and to pictures of it.

And most are now convinced of the existence of the problem and of its urgency.

An experienced teacher is able to give fairly definite suggestions about the best occasions and the best methods for imparting sex knowledge ; but about the encouragement of a healthy attitude to sex and of a fine practice of it, there



## Sex Education

is less certainty. To begin with, there is (within the ordinary limits of scientific accuracy) unanimity about the facts, but uncertainty about what is the best mental attitude and differences of opinion about what is moral behaviour. Where adults are concerned, this uncertainty and these differences need very full consideration ; but fortunately there is more agreement about what sort of attitude is desirable amongst school children, and about what behaviour may reasonably be expected of them. Not complete agreement, of course. Some parents expect their children to be little angels, and some teachers are convinced that they are little devils. But in the views of those who have thought carefully and soberly on the matter, a common tendency may be discerned.

The first point of agreement is that of the importance of the general school tone as a determinant of sexual attitudes. So much has been carelessly claimed for ' tone ' and so much snobbery disguised in terms of it, that many of those who see the shallowness of the claims and are offended by the snobbery of the claimants, tend to dismiss school tone as a fiction. But it is a very real thing, and a very powerful one. Any schoolmaster who has listened to the conversation and observed the behaviour of visiting sports teams knows how real and powerful it is. Of two teams from schools of similar geographical and social setting, one will be foul of tongue and crude of action, while the other will swear no more than is normal if one's shins are hacked and will behave as well as a group of vigorous young lads should ever be expected to behave.

The school is, in short, the crucible of character training. And one important element in the crucible is sex education. It is clear that life in a civilised community implies the regulation of primitive desires and among them the desires of sex, and equally clear that the stronger the individual's character the greater the likelihood of effective regulation. So when a detailed blueprint for sex education is demanded, the answer can only be : ' You shall have it when you produce



## Sex Problems in the School

a recipe for character training'. But difficult as it may be to do this, it is possible to hint at methods of dealing with some of the specific sex problems which crop up on occasion in every school.

It may, incidentally, be mentioned in passing, that the so-called 'sexual activities' of the pre-adolescent are often not essentially sexual at all. Activities of this nature may be directed towards a sexual object, but they are not always motivated by a sexual interest. Adults need to be on their guard that they do not attribute to the child the feeling that would be necessary to lead *them* to such activities. But whether children's play be merely incidentally sex-directed or actually sex-motivated, most children seem to grow up little the worse for it. Despite this, children *do* have to be brought up to observe certain standards of social behaviour, and their sex play can scarcely be given full rein. But the thing to do is not to drive genuine sex interests into suppression, or by censure to magnify sexual interests that scarcely exist, but to provide alternative equally interesting occupations.

### SEXUAL NOTES

Teachers sometimes ask how they should deal with 'the problem of pupils passing obscene notes'. It is difficult to avoid the feeling that the problem is often as much one of prudishness on the part of the teacher as of obscenity on that of the child. Often such notes are, whilst crude in phrasing, innocent enough in intent. If we let our children grow up in an atmosphere of secrecy where sex is concerned, is it surprising that they pass secret notes on the subject? Instead of contemplating with horror the murky mind of the pupil, we might well devote a little time to examining our own sins of omission. It is a fairly common experience that when in schools the pupils are early instructed in the facts of sex, the passing of sexual notes is much diminished. To deal with the matter in isolation simply as a manifestation of original



## Sex Education

nastiness on the part of the individual pupil, is to miss the whole core of the problem.

Surely it is necessary, too, to preserve a sense of perspective and to avoid the sin of hypocrisy. Cases are not rare where a limerick or a cleriheo with sexual implications has been observed on its secret way across the classroom below the desks and promptly commandeered. There follows a hasty glance by the teacher, a rapid dispensation of punishment — and perhaps a suspicion on the part of the pupils that the same slip of paper which was the occasion of their downfall is to provide some hearty roars of laughter in the staff-room during the interval. Let us not demand of our pupils a more rigid code than we are prepared to accept for ourselves. If we believe that any sort of humour in connection with sex is wrong, then let the seizure of the note be an occasion not for punishment but for explanation of our view. But if we feel that certain aspects of sex and sexual behaviour *are* really rather ludicrous, that sex *may* sometimes be the occasion of humour, then let us not be hypocritical. The distinction to make is surely one between hearty, unashamed Rabelaisian laughter and nasty, shame-faced sniggering ; between something which is funny and incidentally sexual and something which is merely filthy in nature. In the words of an eminent churchman, " It is all right making jokes about sex ; what one must not do is to make sex into a joke." If, looked at quite honestly, the commandeered note is not really objectionable, why make sanctimonious complaint ? And if it really does portray a nasty attitude of mind, it is probably best to make no immediate comment, but to make a special point of having a private chat with the pupils concerned. But it should be a chat, not a sermon. And it should be no occasion for surprise or despair if a few minutes of conversation does not completely repair the harm of some years of faulty upbringing.

Usually, sexual notes passing round among the pupils are



## Sex Problems in the School

merely copies at many removes from the original, but occasionally the scholars themselves are the authors. Sometimes such verses and stories are merely pornographic, with no artistic merit whatsoever, expressing the distortion of the mind of the writer and attracting readers only by virtue of their obscenity. It is too much to hope that such minds can easily be straightened out, but in the more serious cases a psychiatrist can often help. In the others, faith must be placed in the cumulative effect of the educational process in a good school, combined with the influence of a good home. And if it be objected that this is not a very cheerful prospect, the reply must be that the teacher who expects miracles from sex education and hopes that in the school all the ill-effects of a disorganised society can be righted, is due for severe disillusion. It is much more realistic, and is more likely in the long run to produce useful results, to face up to the limitations of what can be done in the school and to concentrate on producing the maximum effect within those limitations.

But those of the twisted mind are the exception. Most children who produce literary works of a sexual nature have a merely temporary absorption in the matter, and will usually grow up into fairly normal adults. It is quite understandable that in a society in which open discussion of sex is taboo, high-spirited youngsters to whom a fence around an orchard is an invitation to help themselves to an apple, will derive a certain thrill from trespassing on this forbidden ground. With the taboo removed, the thrill will be diminished. This is not to say that the interest of children in sex will completely disappear, or to imply that it would be a good thing if it did. Sex is an intriguing topic, and there seems to be no good reason why scholars should not derive literary inspiration from it. The fact is that some of the youthful efforts which cause such shaking of heads among the older generation, show real creative ability. The language is often earthy (and what else should we expect if no alternative



## Sex Education

has been provided ?) and the emotions expressed are immature ; but if these are the only shortcomings and there is no sign of a pathological obsession with sex or a perverted view of it, surely the thing to do is to introduce the pupil to better literature, to explain that other children may not have so highly developed an interest in sex, and to suggest that it would therefore be wisest not to circularise any such literary efforts around the school. This suggestion may not always be effective, but will probably be at least a good deal better than the more usual expedient of punishment and prohibition.

### SEXUAL CONVERSATION

Similar considerations apply to 'obscene language' among school children. In the first place, it is necessary to be sure how much is really obscenity, and how much is ignorance of, or unfamiliarity with, an alternative vocabulary. A child who wishes to refer to the parts or the processes indicated by the words *penis*, *testis*, *vagina*, *copulation* and so on, has very often no choice but to use those old four-letter words which have unfortunately during the last few hundred years descended in the social scale and now reached the gutter. A good deal of what passes for obscenity would appear perfectly proper if clothed in the garb of biological nomenclature. The thing to do is not to object to the nakedness, but to provide the cloth whence the garb may be cut, and to point out that while there is nothing intrinsically better about one word than another, certain of the alternatives are not normally used in polite society.

After due allowance has been made for a meagre vocabulary, it may still appear that the ideas expressed therein are objectionable. In that case, the only hopeful procedure is to try to point out *why* the ideas are undesirable. One of our church leaders, after being informed by a truculent north-countryman that he always said exactly what he thought, replied " I don't in the least mind your saying



## Sex Problems in the School

what you think ; what I object to is that you should think what you say." There is the root of the matter — not the immaturity or directness of the language used, but the attitude implied by the idea expressed.

### SEXUAL DRAWINGS

Rather more objectionable is sexual drawing, either on scraps of paper or on closet and urinal walls. All too often these disclose unhealthy attitudes to sex, and the frequency of their occurrence gives a fair measure of the general school tone. But again, distinction must be made between the merely undesirable and the positively obscene. Many a boy, feeling within him the urge to draw, being at an age when he is emotionally interested in sex, and provided by the W.C. walls with a convenient canvas, will draw nudes. And very good drawings many of them are. The only objection is that the canvas is a somewhat unconventional one, and that the presence of such drawings in such surroundings tends to form mental associations between sex and defaecation, and may possibly be an incitement to masturbation. The problem can usually be solved by a double approach. On one hand the conveniences should be clean and shining so as to encourage respect for them (and preferably of a hard white tile upon which drawing is impracticable) ; on the other hand the interest in nudity should be normalised by the provision of alternative outlets. If a pupil wishes to draw nudes, surely the art lesson provides the proper occasion. Then, with suitable encouragement by the teacher, the artistic interest becomes paramount and the excremental association ceases.

But there is no doubt that nude drawings by pupils are sometimes really pornographic, and do really betray contorted minds. This applies particularly to drawings in which the sexual organs are enormously magnified, or to the adding of sexual details to nude photographs or drawings



## Sex Education

(although it might be argued that for a child to add the genitals to a figure from which they have been conspicuously omitted, is no more unnatural than for it to fill in eyes and nose and mouth on a blank face). Even in these cases, it will no doubt be a step in the right direction to bring out the whole matter into the open ; but it would be utopian to expect immediate and complete success in reorientating the children's minds.

### NUDE PHOTOGRAPHS

One of the commonest outlets for children's interest in sex is the perusal of nude photographs. It is only occasionally that these are in themselves obscene. More often they are perfectly unobjectionable in themselves, and sometimes even beautiful works of art. Various nudist and physical culture magazines available at any bookstall at reasonable prices find their way into the hands of school children, and to judge from the mouse-eared condition of many of them, circulate fairly widely. The attitude of the teacher must depend very largely upon the age and degree of emotional maturity of the pupils, and upon their attitude towards the photographs. The first thing to do is to get rid of the feeling that the perusal must be in private, evidenced as it often is by the rapid dispersal of a group of children as the teacher is heard approaching and the sudden slamming of desk lids as he enters the room. Once let the feeling be removed that the photographs must at all costs be kept out of the teacher's sight for fear of punishment, and the whole question is a long way towards solution.

Where the children's interest appears to be a morbid one, it is a case for long-term mental and emotional reorientation. But more often it is only a manifestation of a quite natural interest, reinforced it may be by some years of suppression and sharpened by the joy of doing something which adults might regard as reprehensible and schoolmates as rather



## Sex Problems in the School

'grown up'. In such cases there is scarcely any real problem to deal with except that of bringing the matter out into the open, getting rid of any feeling of guilt, and providing alternative outlets for the interest. And if, as sometimes happens, the magazines find their way into the hands of children who are really too young to have developed such an interest in the normal way, and it is wished to prevent its precocious stimulation, the expedient adopted by a Hertfordshire play centre supervisor has a good deal to recommend it. Observing a seven-year-old with a nudist magazine, she commented casually, "Nice pictures, aren't they? But wouldn't you rather have a comic?" "Oo, yes, Miss," came the reply. "All right then, we'll do a swop, shall we? You give me your magazine now and I'll bring you a comic to-morrow." The only disadvantage to be discerned in this method is that of supply — for as soon as it became known what an excellent exchange Robin had effected, nine-year-old Gordon came magazine in hand to see if the offer were still open!

### OBSCENE JOURNALS

On a quite different plane from the magazines which happen to carry nude photographs, are those which have a quite deliberate aphrodisiac intent and which are often imported from abroad. These are thoroughly bad in their influence, and the less they are seen in the school, the better. Their illustrations are rarely of straightforward nudes, but more often of women in various stages of undress or in suggestive postures, perhaps with no claim to beauty, but clearly implying that sexual intercourse is the next item on the agenda. Their stories have similar implications, and often suggest not merely that intercourse is an enjoyable thing (which is, of course, perfectly true), but that it is a purely physical thing, with no trace of deep and sympathetic emotional feeling. They imply, moreover, as often as not, that a fur coat or a string of pearls is a perfectly fair exchange for



## Sex Education

the use of a person's body. These illustrations can scarcely fail to give an immature mind a thoroughly degrading idea of sex, they may cause precocious stimulation of sexual interest, and they are a direct incitement to promiscuity and likely to weaken resistance to masturbation, so that the most broad-minded of us cannot fail to condemn them.

But condemnation does not produce annihilation, and meantime the magazines continue to circulate. With older pupils who have had an adequate sex education, it should not be difficult to get them to see how degrading the magazines are. But in the case of younger children, and older ones whose earlier education has been neglected, sterner measures seem called for. Merely to confiscate the copies observed and to punish their readers solves nothing. The only radical solution seems to be to get at the sources of supply. If a talk by the head teacher with the vendors produces no effect, it becomes a matter for the police and the courts. And if the police and courts do not take appropriate action, it becomes a matter for the pupils' parents and for all local citizens not to rest until action is taken.

## NUDITY

So many children are brought up to feel that nudity is wrong and the sex organs things to be hidden away from sight, that it is not surprising if they take delight in portraying (and occasionally exhibiting) them. But it is the half-ashamed portrayal and exhibition that is undesirable. Casts of one or two figures such as 'Boy with Fish' and 'The Duck Baby' in primary schools, and 'The Praying Boy' and 'Simplicity' in secondary schools, should be openly displayed in halls or corridors; while if among other good drawings, paintings and photographs, the hangings in the classrooms include a few nudes, the interest and delight which all healthy-minded people feel in the beautiful human body will be brought out into the open. And if



## Sex Problems in the School

school shower baths and swimming baths are habitually used by the pupils naked and unashamed, much of the morbidity of their interest will disappear.

There are, naturally, varying attitudes among the pupils. Many teachers will recognise the state of affairs reported from a Cheshire school :

As to nudity, there is the greatest difference of attitude. We have showers, which naturally involve communal undressing. Many of the girls don't object at all. Some do — but I think it is rather their mothers who are shocked. The little girls including those up to 13 or 14 just undress and get on with the showers without fuss.

There may be difficulties, of course. In the first place, the pupils may show considerable reluctance to disclose themselves. A grammar school in Lancashire at long last had showers installed in connection with the gymnasium, and it took the best part of a term before the boys could be persuaded that it was really rather a waste of energy for their gym knickers to be dried out twice a week because they insisted on wearing them while standing under the showers. Another half-term elapsed before they gave up the notion that it was necessary for the canvas screen to be drawn completely, lest their form-mates should observe that they also had genital organs. But by the end of the year the canvas could be dispensed with and put to better uses, and the pupils' attitude to nudity was a completely natural one.

Where swimming baths are concerned, matters are often complicated by the existence of regulations or by the presence of the general public, and costumes may be *de rigueur*. But where the school has its own bath, or has the sole use of a public bath for the occasion, costumes may surely be dispensed with. They are, after all, already dispensed with by the richest and the poorest sections of the community, and as one Cheshire teacher has pointed out :

if schools generally were to take similar action, they would merely be conferring on the middle-class child the privilege which has



## Sex Education

so far been enjoyed mainly by the public school boy and his brother the poor child of the cities, who can afford neither bath nor costume and goes in the nearest canal.

It is certainly undesirable to force nudity upon children who would be embarrassed by it ; but the number of such will rapidly diminish in a school where costumes are the exception. Particularly among adolescent girls, however, there will usually be some who prefer to garb themselves. An interesting case is that of a co-educational boarding school in Surrey which was fortunate enough to have its own outdoor swimming pool in the school grounds. Boys and girls bathed together, and very few wore costumes below the age of about fourteen. But of the older pupils, while most remained naked in the company of their own sex, a fair proportion preferred costumes in mixed company. This did not seem to be silly prudishness — indeed it was a school where conditions were very unfavourable to the development of that characteristic — but appeared to indicate a natural reticence. It would have been a mistake to have insisted on nudity, or in any way to have chided those who wore costumes, for that would have been to direct special attention to the sex organs as surely as does the more usual insistence on some covering. Where reticence exists, it must be respected ; but that is a very different matter from encouraging the feeling that nudity is in some way evil.

The simple and natural way in which young children take to nudity is evident from the notes of a progressive Kent headmistress :

This year during a heat wave [she writes] infants were doing rhythmic work indoors in knickers only (now quite accepted except by two families) ; one little boy (5) wore only bathing costume to school ; when other children removed frocks and skirts he took off bathing suit. No child took any apparent interest. Teacher said, " No, John, I don't think Mother meant you to take that off " ; he replied, " Yes, yes, she likes me to." (He is child of School Manager — his mother since says he had



## Sex Problems in the School

never asked her — but she didn't really mind.) However, teacher told him to put it on. By now children very hot, thought it a good idea and asked if they couldn't take everything off. Teacher said she didn't want them to for dancing, but some people liked to sunbathe with nothing on and the only place they could do that would be on the lawn of—— (School Manager with lovely hedged-in lawn next to school, quite private, where infants and juniors have free play and barefoot exercise on grass), and perhaps if Friday (freeplay afternoon) were still hot, and they had sun hats, those whose mothers really said so might take their things off up there. When Friday came children were asked individually and about half of the 70-odd said mother gave permission, and they had a lovely afternoon. I saw the classes — all, both naked and partly clothed, were busy with balls, ropes, etc. and gave no sign by word, look or deed of curiosity in one another or attention to their bodies. All taken as incidental to school life.

There is, admittedly, always the possibility of having an occasional narrow-minded mother who, as in this case, said that upon hearing from another parent of the incident, she asked her little girl (5) what had taken place.

Mary went terribly red and said, "Everyone took off their knickers but teacher and me". This woman said she would teach her child 'it is not Christian to go naked, so God has given us a covering'.

The same teacher appeared to deal very sensibly with the achievement of a reasonable compromise with social convention. There was

one overdeveloped 9-year-old in the playground in knickers only — playground very public, iron fence opening on road, troops and strangers about. I remarked casually that now she was growing so fast perhaps she had better keep her vest on except on the lawn; the big girls all like to keep their bodies to themselves when outsiders are about. She and the rest of the class seemed to take this properly.

Good sense in the teacher will evoke good sense in the child, and a healthy attitude to nudity can be developed without excessive public exposure.



by *Handwritten signature*  
B.Sc. *Final 8.6.63*  
September, *1963* Sex Education

## BOY-AND-GIRL ROMANCES

In mixed schools particularly, the problem is posed — 'What are we to do about older boys and girls who are having "affairs" with each other?' and one is sometimes inclined to answer 'Why do anything?' It is natural enough that these friendships should develop, and it is surely better that they should grow openly in the healthy atmosphere of a school than that they should become sickly and etiolated by being hidden in the dark. All too often the teachers who make such a query appear more concerned with the so-called 'reputation' of their school than with the emotional development of their pupils. So far from such friendships being undesirable, they may form a very valuable element in the education of young people. The boy and the girl who meet daily in their ordinary working conditions are unlikely to suffer from many illusions about each other's characters. They will soon learn that a friendship based purely on physical attraction is a poor thing compared with one in which intellectual comradeship and mutual respect play a part.

It is a different matter if the friendship is developing to a stage in which either advanced petting or actual intercourse enter the picture. Whatever one's feelings about the morality of such actions among adults, it is generally agreed that for school children they are undesirable, and the teacher would be quite justified in taking fairly drastic action to prevent them. But this will rarely happen, and usually these boy-and-girl romances need cause no qualms.

## SEXUAL EXPERIMENTATION

Children are enterprising young creatures and one must always face the possibility of their indulging in sexual or quasi-sexual experimentation. Although such activities are openly recognised in many primitive societies, there are some



## Sex Problems in the School

who doubt whether they do in fact take place among our own children, but the following note by a Staffordshire head-mistress is fairly typical of the experience of those who keep their eyes and ears open :

Child of 11 told form mistress of own experiences before entrance — as an evacuee in elementary school, little boys and girls *regularly* played together in a sexual way ' behind the bushes ' . . . .

Such a possibility is sometimes urged as an argument against sex education when all other pleas have failed. But the solution of the problem is not less sex education, but more, and of a better sort.

The matter in so far as it relates to pre-pubic children can be contemplated with a good deal more equanimity than it may with older pupils. There is no possibility of an unwanted conception in the former case, while in the latter, this possibility is bound to loom very large in any consideration of the problem, and may dictate the adoption of sterner measures than would otherwise be contemplated.

So far as younger children are concerned, there is very little of a moral issue. True morals are elaborated in response to an intellectual understanding and emotional appreciation of the issues involved in a choice — although it is true that mere unthinking subservience to tradition is often graced by the name. Until children have formed some understanding of the many personal and social implications of sexuality, and have felt some of its emotions, quasi-sexual experimentation on their part can scarcely be regarded as immoral. It may, nevertheless, be regarded as undesirable, since if the habit of such play is established early on, it may possibly be carried over into post-pubic years, with the consequent possibility of an undesired conception, and with the further possibility of the development of an unduly frivolous attitude to sex.

Usually, therefore, the teacher will wish to check any such tendency — not by moral censure or physical punishment, but



## Sex Education

by gentle discouragement and the provision of alternative activities.

With adolescent children an element of morality begins to appear, because they are beginning to appreciate the significance of sex in life. It may often, therefore, be wisest to take up the matter directly with the pupils concerned, and to point out the reasons for regarding such experimentation as undesirable. Most boys and girls in their early 'teens will be ready enough to see how their lives would be complicated and even blighted by the premature attainment of parenthood, and are very amenable to an appeal for consideration of the hard lot of the child born under such circumstances. Such at any rate is the experience of one Kent headmistress who writes :

One (head girl, very bright and nice) had to wait for 16th birthday to marry local boy (whom she now regrets marrying), baby born 3 mths. after marriage ; another (also head girl) married local boy at 16, twins born few months later ; two others, lower mentality, married because of pregnancy at 17. I spend much time now in openly warning girls of 12 plus of misery of marrying in this way. They seem to take it very seriously and will discuss with an elderly married mistress on the staff cases amongst girls who have left school (*e.g.*, Do you think, Mrs. B——, that a mother ought to turn her girl out if she is like X—— ?).

If such arguments fail, what is to be done ? The issue is not merely one of the morals of the individuals concerned. It is also one of saving them from the consequences of their own stupidity, and of saving others from it too. In such circumstances, the teacher may well feel, albeit reluctantly, that drastic measures are necessary ; even, if it must be, the separation of the pupils involved by the transfer of at least one of them to another school. This does not solve the question of the right attitude of mind of the individuals concerned, but it does limit the extent of possible ill effects. What is clearly undesirable is to regard a certain mode of



## Sex Problems in the School

behaviour among school children in the same way as one would regard similar behaviour among adults. No one but the teacher concerned, with an intimate knowledge of the child's intellectual and emotional state, its home background and so on, can lay down specific rules for dealing with individual cases of this kind. Often, however, the psychologist can give considerable help, and should always be consulted by a teacher in doubt.

### [ MASTURBATION ]

Most teachers of boys have at some time come up against the problem of masturbation, and many are at a loss to deal with it. It is, incidentally, a problem that sometimes concerns fairly young boys. The headmaster of a preparatory boarding school in the South Midlands writes :

I keep fairly detailed records of talks with each boy and I think the following statistics about masturbation may be of interest, taken from the sheets of 150 boys (age about 10½) :

34% had never masturbated.

14% had done so at some time but had given it up ' through conscience ' or because their mothers had mentioned the matter.

10% masturbated every night.

27% once a week.

15% once a fortnight.

It is by no means likely that these figures are typical for boys of this age, but certainly of those who are a few years older, the majority do get into the habit at some time or another.

An interesting point is that of those people who do at some time in their lives masturbate, a higher proportion of girls than of boys appears to begin the practice at an early age. Figures compiled from several investigators give the following percentages of cases starting the habit at various ages :



## Sex Education

Age of Onset	Males	Females
Up to 12th birthday .	20.9	49.1
12th-15th birthday .	44.3	14.6
15th-18th birthday .	30.3	6.2
After 18th birthday .	4.5	30.1

Many adults will probably be inclined to doubt whether in fact girls do masturbate in childhood to the extent suggested by such figures, and there is no doubt that further research is needed to provide a firmer basis for the formation of a valid opinion.

In males, solitary masturbation almost invariably takes the form of handling of the <sup>with the</sup> penis, although other forms of the practice are known. In females, pleasure is usually derived merely from movements of the thighs or by rubbing the sexual regions against external objects such as benches and stools. Cases are, however, known in which objects such as pencils, candles and the like have been used as penis-substitutes. Teachers will not often come across these extreme cases; but they should know of their existence in case they happen to do so, when the individuals concerned should be referred to a psychiatrist for treatment.

So far as more normal children are concerned, the first thing that needs to be said is that masturbation is rather less of a problem than is often made out to be the case, and the whole question is dealt with more fully below (Chapter Six). But even granting this, very few experienced teachers will deny that masturbation, of little or no harm in itself, may in certain circumstances become really objectionable. This applies for example where a group of boys learn habitually to practice mutual masturbation, in boarding schools often in the dormitory and in day schools often in the closets. It is not unusual for a request 'to leave the room' to cloak an intention of resorting to the conveniences not for legitimate purposes, but as hidden enclosure where masturbation may



## Sex Problems in the School

be effected with little fear of discovery. In some cases this may be fairly harmless, but there is always the possibility that frequent indulgence in such surroundings may lead to mental association between the reproductive and the voiding functions, which clearly may bear the seeds of later sexual maladjustment or perversion. It is not unknown, either, for pairs or groups of boys to resort to the closets in company, and to make what is normally a solitary practice into a communal one. In such circumstances there is very likely to develop, granted the usual shamefaced attitude to sex, a feeling of partnership in guilt, which, while providing momentary exhilaration, may be the root of much later unhappiness. This way, too, lies one road to homosexuality.

What then is to be done? More is said in Chapter Six, but it is certain that the solution does not lie along the path chosen by at least one school, of removing all bolts from closet doors, and refusing ever to allow two pupils to be absent from the class at the same time. This is an easy path, but one that can scarcely fail to put ideas into the heads of children who would otherwise never entertain them. When, as happened in this case, the 'preventive' measures were strengthened by the institution of a rota among the staff for the purpose of spying on the pupils in the closets, a degree of intrusion upon the pupils' privacy is reached which is quite intolerable. It is a matter of weighing up on one hand the respect that is owed to the pupil's right to a private life, and on the other hand the need to make tactful enquiries in those cases where excessive indulgence in the practice of masturbation is suspected. Sometimes these enquiries may lead to a decision to consult a psychologist; but more often it will transpire that a friendly chat to the pupils concerned will be sufficient. If, as may happen in some cases, there appears to be little success, this is no ground for despair. The teacher cannot hope easily to repair the damage due to years of faulty upbringing and a faulty social environment. All that can be expected is that a certain



## Sex Education

proportion of pupils may be helped to a saner attitude to sex and a more satisfactory sex life.

### HOMOSEXUALITY

Whereas masturbation is so common a feature of male adolescence as to be regarded almost as a normal stage of development, and should in most cases cause the teacher but little real concern, the same cannot be said of homosexuality. Here is a real deviation, and one which is by no means unknown in our schools. In characterising homosexuality as a deviation, it is mainly overt physical practice that is in mind, for mere emotional attachment to persons of one's own sex is quite normal, especially in pre-adolescence. The use of the word 'deviation', moreover, must not here be taken as implying moral judgment. Advancing knowledge of the working of our endocrine glands and of the functioning of our minds necessitates a much more charitable attitude towards those who, because of their physical or mental inheritances or experiences, find normal heterosexual behaviour unsatisfying and prefer to love a companion of their own sex. But charity or no charity, deviation it is. And undeniable as it may be that there have been periods in history when homosexuality has been generally admired, and that in our own society some of our finest artistic works have been the creation of homosexuals, it is equally undeniable that for most people, at most times, normal heterosexuality is infinitely preferable.

We simply ask for a great deal of our trouble, of course, by segregating masses of boys for three-quarters of the year in isolation from the other sex. Someone has characterised our penal establishments as 'monasteries of people unwilling to be monks', and *mutatis mutandis*, the same applies to boarding schools for either sex. So far as day schools are concerned, the normal home life and the ordinary day-by-day contact with many families, prevents the development



## Sex Problems in the School

of the problem on anything like the same scale. But even here cases are not rare where, as Edward Carpenter described, "the younger boy looks on the other as a hero, loves to be with him, thrills with pleasure at his words of kindness"—and, on occasion, enters upon physical relations with him.

Mere punishment of the pupils concerned is no solution of the matter—and as far as corporal punishment is concerned, may be an actual aggravation of it. Very often a friendly talk will be helpful, and this may be reinforced by measures designed to keep the couple apart so far as possible. Sometimes the teacher will feel it wise to call on the services of a psychiatrist, and occasionally may find it necessary to remove one child (while recognising that this does not solve his problem) in order to prevent contamination of others. But even when such drastic measures are called for, over-hasty moral condemnation must be avoided.

### ' CRUSHES ' AND HERO-WORSHIP

' Homosexuality ' is an elastic word, and, covering at one extreme those manifestations which are actually criminal, is very often extended at the other to include those ' crushes ' or ' pashes ' or ' G.P.'s ' from which few girls' schools are free. These may arise between two pupils as a result of the most trivial circumstance, perhaps a chance meeting on the first day as ' new girls ', but they are often of a peculiar intensity. Wandering about with arms round each other's waists, the girls are convinced of the permanence of their friendship—a conviction which does not seem to be weakened by the fairly rapid succession of quarrels and reconciliations.

Crushes of this sort may sometimes demonstrate a lack of emotional satisfaction, particularly in relation to the mother, and school work may temporarily suffer, but homosexual as may be their emotional origin, they seem to do little or no permanent harm. They may, however, become a cause for



## Sex Education

serious concern when they lead to definite love-play and mutual masturbation. The results may then have something in common with those of solitary masturbation, those of physical homosexuality among boys, and those of mixed necking or petting parties. And the ways in which the teacher can help have similar indications and similar limitations.

Rather more serious in its emotional effects may be the 'G.P.' of a girl for her teacher. She will love to make her presents, will be thrilled to the core if given the opportunity of carrying out some trivial service such as fetching a hand-bag or umbrella, and will model herself on her mother-substitute in all sorts of little ways. In some respects, if the teacher is of high character, this modelling may be advantageous ; but with her immature discrimination, the girl may equally copy traits that are essentially mean and petty.

We may not lose sight of the fact that the teacher, deprived as she often is by the unbelievably foolish marriage bar<sup>1</sup> of the satisfaction of having husband and children of her own, may, albeit unconsciously, achieve a good deal of personal gratification from the relationship. Unless very wisely handled by the older partner, such 'G.P.'s may have a permanent effect on the girls' development, hindering considerably the attainment of emotional maturity. The teacher of whom it is said " She's marvellous ! The girls absolutely dote on her ", needs to be particularly careful in her relationship with her pupils. And although matters rarely reach the same peak of intensity in boys' schools, similar principles apply.

## MIXED SCHOOLS

People have been known to object to co-education on the ground that it will lead to all sorts of sexual problems, and

<sup>1</sup> Since the above was written, the 1944 Education Act has removed this marriage bar.



## Sex Problems in the School

sometimes the objection has been couched in such exaggerated language as to convey the impression that mixed schools are full of fornication. Both theory and practice refute the objection.

Naturally, one's view will depend upon what one considers to constitute a 'sexual problem'. If, for example, ordinary adolescent boy-and-girl friendships come under this heading, then problems there certainly are. In any mixed school of healthy boys and girls there will almost certainly be several romances in full flush on any chosen day. But within normal limits there are usually no serious problems, unless indeed absurd 'disciplinary' measures bring them into being.

It must be admitted that rare cases of fairly advanced and even complete sexual relations may occur in the mixed school, and when they do arise they present a real problem. But this is no argument against co-education, for such cases also occur between boys and girls attending separate schools. And the mixed school at least is more likely to be free from homosexuality. It is necessary in viewing this matter to be very honest. Many teachers who, if challenged, would affirm that homosexuality is a perversion and therefore morally inferior to heterosexuality, would nevertheless far rather have a case of homosexuality between two pupils in their school than of sexual relations between a boy and a girl. It is, moreover, very difficult to avoid the conclusion that the real reason for this is the greater likelihood of the latter activity betraying itself by its consequences to the world outside the school. If all that is required is a good 'school reputation', then admittedly co-education has its disadvantages. But if more importance is given to the healthy emotional and social development of the pupils, then co-education brings potentialities which outweigh the problems.

Mixing together in classroom, boys and girls learn to appreciate that both sexes have largely similar mental processes, and that males are not invariably gifted with a



## Sex Education

peculiarly 'masculine logic', for the absence of which females are compensated by the possession of a capricious 'feminine intuition'. This is in itself an important lesson, for a great deal that is unwholesome in the sex relations of our society depends upon some such mistaken belief. Mixing together in swimming and rambling and camping, in music and drama and debate, they learn to understand each other physically and emotionally. Sharing in the preparation of tables for school meals and of 'props' for school plays, they grow up to feel that men and women are not quite unlike in their capabilities and social functions.

All this naturally assumes that the school is a genuinely co-educational one — not like that of which an old girl pupil reported :

The only form of co-operation we had with the boys was an annual debate when the boys sat on one side of the Hall and the girls on the other. This attitude led to one of indifference in the Junior school, craftiness in the Middle school and open rebellion in the Senior.

Very different must have been the Kent school of which the head teacher wrote :

In school, boys and girls mixed freely for athletics — changing into running kit — boys stripped to waist, girls in running shorts and tops — both masters and mistresses present — no difficulties. . . . Pupils from the school in most cases went on to mixed evening classes and mixed factories. Marriages did and do occur at fairly early age — 20's — but marriage because of pregnancy the exception. I discussed this last year with an old pupil, now married : she said, " Oh, well, we're brought up together so much, aren't we ? I don't think we think so much about those things."

### INSPIRATION IN THE SCHOOL

The teacher who is concerned for the welfare of his charges, who has dealt adequately with their factual instruction about sex, who deals wisely with individual problems of



## Sex Problems in the School

sexual behaviour, has still to face the major problem — that of providing an atmosphere in the school which will help the smooth assimilation of the facts and reduce the likelihood of occurrence of the problems.

The sexual curiosity of children is often reinforced by their determination not to be outstripped in knowledge by their peers. The child who knows less than his form-mates will have a feeling of inferiority. He will not admit his ignorance to them, but will use every means — looking up in encyclopaedias, listening avidly to sexual conversation and so on — in order to reduce the gap. In the same way, a pupil who has no special desire to take part in 'sexy' talk, to look at nude photographs, to retail 'dirty' stories, to indulge in sexual experimentation, will often do so in order to avoid being thought an 'innocent'. The atmosphere in the school should be such that the child will go to the teacher for the answers to its queries, will not be faced with this competition in sexual knowledge, and if invited to obscenity by its fellows, will reject the invitation with contempt.

In the opening section of this chapter reference was made to that tenuous thing 'the school tone', and we must close on the same theme. Is there a feeling of complete confidence between pupils and staff? Does the place hum with busy happiness? Do the children but rarely meet the temptation to obscenity, and feel superior to it when they do? Are the troubles of adolescence made less troublesome and its friendships more fruitful? Here is the key to the problem of sex education in the school. Without a healthy atmosphere, not all the instruction in the world will force the lock. With it, the door may be swung open to a brave new world.



mt so has for  
young men.

## Chapter Six

# In the Service of Youth

Odi et amo. Quare id faciam, fortasse requiris.  
Nescio : sed fieri sentio, et excrucior.

CATULLUS

## THE NATURE OF ADOLESCENCE

" I HATE and I love. You may want to know why. I know not : but I feel it so happens, and am tortured." Here are summed up the difficulties of adolescence. After the sureness and security of pre-puberty comes a period of uncertainty, of physiological, psychological and social disequilibrium, and it is not surprising that problems arise. In so far as the social uncertainty is concerned, this is very largely a development of the last few generations. Until recently economic conditions were such (and in many parts of the world still are such) that except in the case of the children of the wealthy few, there was no possibility of a long period of years betwixt and between childhood and adulthood. Up to a certain stage a person was a child. Past a certain stage that person was an adult, with an adult's responsibilities and an adult's rights. But with the economic and social changes of the last few generations, especially in Western Europe and America, our young people are now faced with a period in which they have neither the freedom of the child nor the status of the adult. They are the in-betweens, who present all ' the problems of youth ' about which we hear so much. Perhaps we might do better to speak of ' the problems of a society in which youth is uncertain of its place '.

It is impossible to define exactly an age at which adolescence begins. Yet everyone can recognise the adolescent — the boy and girl just leaving childhood behind and



## In the Service of Youth

about to enter on adult life, often rather shy and moody, often awkward, feeling their way carefully through the great new world opening out before them. Adolescence is the period when not only is the body maturing and the sex organs becoming very active, not only are the sex hormones leading to exciting and disturbing new emotions, but there is also a fine flowering of the whole personality.

According to figures given by Cole for American children, the onset of physical puberty ranges from nine to eighteen years of age for girls and from eleven to eighteen for boys. With girls, the onset of the first period gives a clear dividing line, and this takes place in about 15 per cent of girls by the time they have attained the age of twelve, in about 50 per cent of cases a year later, in 75 per cent by the next year, and in about 90 per cent by the age of fifteen. With boys, it is difficult to define the attainment of puberty so exactly, for there is no one dramatic and easily dateable occurrence corresponding to menstruation. But so far as can be estimated, this phase in their development is reached by about 17 per cent of boys by the age of thirteen years, 40 per cent by fourteen, 65 per cent by fifteen, and about 85 per cent by sixteen. This indicates a time-difference of between one and two years, on the average, between girls and boys. These figures cannot be adopted rigidly, for the age at which the sex organs become active varies from individual to individual, from climate to climate, from one ethnic group to another, and perhaps even from town to country. But as a rough average, it would probably be fairly true to say that, in the Western World, adolescence begins for boys at about fourteen years of age, and for girls a year or two years earlier.

### NEED FOR SYMPATHY

Adolescence brings with it many problems. Not only are far-reaching bodily and emotional changes taking place,



## Sex Education

but these are often aggravated by the lack of sympathy and understanding demonstrated by many adults. Men and women appear so often to have an uncanny faculty for forgetting their own youth, and for condemning too easily practices which they once made their own. Yet perhaps at no time more than at adolescence are people in need of tact and kindness. The adolescent is characteristically self-conscious, and characteristically afraid that other people are 'noticing things' and disapproving of what they note. The slightest physical blemish, or even an abnormality that is no blemish and may even (like a slight lisp) be later in life a faintly attractive feature, may cause agonies of shyness and confusion. The adolescent must not be too fat or too thin, too tall or too short, too pimply or too smooth-skinned. In fact, of course, the probability is that no-one is taking the slightest notice of these features, but this the adolescent does not believe. *He* feels embarrassed because he is rather lanky and his trousers are too short; *she* is overcome with confusion because she has committed some minor social *faux pas* — and it is natural (even if incorrect) to assume that others pay equal attention to these trifles. What wonder, then, if emotions become entangled and young people suffer agonies in consequence? And what wonder if they sometimes shield their sensitivity with a mask of bravado?

### AGGRESSIVENESS

Aggressiveness is often regarded as an inevitable feature of adolescence. All teachers are familiar with the older pupil who, previously as docile as a healthy child should be (and that is not nearly so docile as many teachers imagine), becomes 'impudent' and 'a disturbing influence in the school'. All youth leaders know the boy who is resentful of authority and the girl who turns on her heel and jaunts away when criticised — the young people who 'may break up the club if we're not careful'. And



## In the Service of Youth

parents may always be found to bemoan the fact that Jenny is liable to flare up into tempers and Johnny is thoroughly unreasonable.

May it not be, however, that much of this aggressiveness is due to lack of sympathetic understanding on the part of adults? And to a failure on the part of society to recognise adolescence as a natural stage of development? Many primitive tribes do better in this matter. The onset of puberty is regarded not as a nuisance, not as an unwarranted trespassing from the garden of innocent childhood, but as a great and important stage in the life of the young person, to be marked by ceremony and heralded with acclaim, as Margaret Mead describes among the Manus of New Guinea :

The hour of puberty itself is marked by ceremony and public observance. When the girl has her first menses, her father or guardian . . . throws great numbers of coconuts into the sea. All the neighbours' children leap in after them, shouting, struggling with one another for the nuts. . . . The event is regarded without embarrassment as important to the adults because a whole round of ceremonials is set up, important to the children because a sort of house party will be instituted in the house of the pubescent girl. . . . It stands out in the girl's mind as a rather gay social event, an occasion for pride and display. . . .

Should we not also acknowledge the importance of this stage, and provide a suitable material and social environment for it?

It is perfectly understandable that the adolescent, only too conscious of his own deficiencies, well aware that the disturbing physical and emotional changes which are occurring mean that he is leaving childhood behind, should kick against the restraints imposed by adults who have forgotten what adolescence means. Young people must be allowed to make mistakes and to learn by them. They must be allowed to be exuberant or shy as they will, and they must be allowed when they so wish to laze about and recuperate from the



## Sex Education

physical and emotional stresses of this period. Well-meaning efforts to make sure that they always do right, that they are sociable when they need to be solitary or quiet when they need to be noisy, that they 'find something useful to do' when they feel the need for relaxation, will inevitably arouse opposition in adolescents of any mettle.

It is not a serious problem, although it may be a temporary inconvenience, when a young person is rebellious, sceptical and argumentative. Only rarely does the rebellion become so chronic and so purposeless as to damage the personality. The real problem arises when all authority is accepted without question, all the beliefs of an older generation without thought, all the statements of adults without contradiction. Then there is a real danger that the adolescent may have given up the struggles of this trying period, and may prefer to live in a world of make-believe and phantasy. That way lies intellectual and emotional disaster.

## PHYSICAL GROWTH

Much of the awkwardness of adolescence is a direct result of the rapid general growth characteristic of that period. After the enormous increase of the pre-natal months and the fairly quick growth of infancy, childhood brings a slower rate. At puberty there is a fresh spurt, and at maturity slowness supervenes once more. Those who have reached maturity often forget that these years of adolescence are very exacting ones. In both sexes the thigh-bone lengthens considerably and in girls the pelvis broadens, and these and other skeletal changes make great calls on the organism. An adolescent may gain six inches and twenty-five pounds in a year. The muscles, which at eight years of age have a weight about a quarter of that of the body, form nearly half of it eight years later. The muscle power increases enormously, and this new-found strength, not yet fully mastered, expressed in movements not yet fully co-ordinated, leads to



## In the Service of Youth

gaucheness and apparent carelessness. In these adolescent years the heart nearly doubles in size, the capacity of the lungs increases, and many new paths are built up in the maturing nervous system. All these growth changes do not take place without exacting their price, and occasional languor and apparent laziness are only to be expected.

It is, however, possible to use this physical growth constructively. Adolescents, whether at school or at club, are often very interested to keep graphical records of monthly readings of their own height and weight increases. Properly handled, such measurements can be made the basis for the development of a certain amount of that proper pride which is the basis of self-respect.

### ENDOCRINE CHANGES

Most marked of the changes of adolescence are those that may be traced to the action of the endocrine (ductless) glands. These glands produce chemicals known as 'hormones' which, dissolving in the blood and being carried by it all over the body, exert a very powerful influence. Perhaps the best known example of a hormone is the insulin necessary to the proper utilisation of sugars, the failure of the pancreas to produce it causing a form of diabetes. Most people will also be familiar with the thyroid gland in the neck, the failure of which to produce its hormone thyroxin in sufficient quantity, leads to both physical and mental sluggishness and in extreme cases causes the individual to develop as an idiot — a cretin. If the hormone is produced to excess it tends, in addition to bringing about certain bodily effects, to cause excitability and emotional instability ; while if the gland itself becomes overgrown, it produces that swelling in the neck commonly known as a 'goitre'.

The ovaries and testes also contain endocrine gland tissue which becomes particularly active at the beginning of



## Sex Education

adolescence, and the hormones produced by it and by the pituitary gland are largely responsible for the changes by which children mature into adults. Both sexes develop hair under the arms and about the sex organs, while boys also grow it on the face and chest. In girls the hips and breasts become fuller and in boys the voice breaks. The ovaries and testes are themselves stimulated to the production of eggs and sperm, although this may not happen until quite late in adolescence. The sex hormones, moreover, are in part responsible for the emotional changes of adolescence, for the development of that sexual interest and desire which is one of the characteristics of maturity.

### MENSTRUATION

Perhaps the most obvious of the results of endocrine change in girls is the onset of menstruation. Approximately each twenty-eight days, one of the mature ovaries may liberate an egg.<sup>1</sup> If this happens to be fertilised, it will develop into an embryo which will need for its continued growth a rich blood supply in the wall of the womb, and this is also built up each month. If, however, the egg is not fertilised, the blood supply is not needed and the lining of the womb disintegrates, the resulting mixture of blood and other tissue passing over a period of a few days out of the vagina.

Ideally, both boys and girls should have been given a simple explanation of menstruation long before they join a youth organisation. Often, unfortunately, even when the girl has been told how to cope with the practical details of personal hygiene, she has little or no understanding of the significance of the cycle ; while to most adolescent boys it is a slightly indecent mystery. It is wise, therefore, for youth leaders to make a special point of clarifying the ideas of club members on this matter of menstruation.

<sup>1</sup> It is now recognised that the onset of menstruation may considerably precede that of ovulation.



## In the Service of Youth

### SEMINAL EMISSION

Adolescent boys are often troubled by a 'problem' which is really no problem at all. As their sex glands become more active, a great deal of ~~secretion~~ is produced. This semen cannot accumulate indefinitely, and usually passes out from the penis at night — producing the so-called 'nocturnal emissions' or 'night losses', which may occur as frequently as once a week. Since the passage of the liquid is often accompanied by erotic dreams, these nocturnal emissions are often referred to as 'wet dreams'. Nothing could be more natural than these emissions — yet they are a nightmare of worry to many millions of young boys. Unreasonable feelings of guilt are often experienced, and ignorant or thoughtless parents too often aggravate them. What should be given not a second thought becomes a source of worry and mental conflict, and in some cases a whole lifetime of unhappiness may ensue.

It is probably the erotic dream accompanying the emission that is the main cause of the guilt feeling. Too often, even to-day, small boys and girls are taught that it is 'rude' to see each other undressed; to see a mother feeding her baby is considered in many homes unseemly, and the sight has sometimes caused the small boy to suffer feelings of jealousy and resentment. Thus any dream portraying the female figure or some scene of passionate tenderness will arouse conflicting emotions of pleasure and disgust, and the boy may not realise that the dream itself is outside his conscious control and that he is not 'guilty' in having it. Adult help or advice should stress the value of being able to re-direct one's thoughts during waking hours, but should insist on the naturalness of the emission and the essential innocence of the dream.

There sometimes takes place in girls an occurrence essentially similar in nature to night losses. Clearly there can in this case be no emission of semen, but there may be



## Sex Education

an involuntary sexual orgasm during sleep, accompanied by erotic or anxiety dreams. Since there is no unaesthetic discharge of liquid to soil pyjamas or sheets and remind the adolescent next morning of what has happened, girls are not normally presented with quite the same problem as boys. Indeed, in most cases the girl is probably scarcely aware of what has happened. There is therefore no need to dispense explanation to all and sundry; but it is well for adults to be aware of the facts so that they can give guidance to any individuals who may need it.

### MASTURBATION

A major sex problem of adolescence is that of masturbation. Upon this matter of self-gratification by the handling of the sex organs — the so-called 'self-abuse' — an enormous amount of nonsense, and pernicious nonsense at that, has been spoken and written. Boys have been persuaded that the practice will lead to everything from spotty faces to insanity and from venereal infection to eternal perdition. In the name of purity, lies have been bandied about freely and young people tortured with doubt and self-condemnation.

The truth is vastly different. Most infants display a great interest in their genital organs. Normally this interest dies down in a few years, but it is reawakened in the years of puberty. And this reawakening normally takes the form of masturbation. The word 'normally' is used advisedly. It seems well established that the vast majority of civilised persons at some time or another derive pleasure from handling or otherwise stimulating their sex organs. In the case of females the masturbation is often very slight, consisting of little more than a wriggling movement which causes stimulation of the vaginal surface. In males, masturbation usually leads to erection of the penis and, in those who are sufficiently mature, to ejaculation.



## In the Service of Youth

Those who have given the matter serious study, inform us that at least 90 per cent of men in Europe and America have at some time or other masturbated — and many would put the figure considerably higher. The medical officer of a well-known English public school estimated 95 per cent as the figure for the boys living there. But whatever be the precise percentage, one thing is clear — the practice of masturbation among men is so widespread as to be considered almost a normal stage in their sexual development.

It is rather more difficult to come by reliable figures for females, since opinions differ radically among those competent to judge. On the one hand, an American investigation of a thousand adult college women gave a figure of 60 per cent with histories of masturbation ; while on the other, most women teachers and youth leaders in Great Britain feel that the practice is rare. It seems likely that these American figures for females may in general be far too high if *deliberate* masturbation alone, as distinct from mere semi-conscious stimulation, is considered. The probability is that older women who are forced to remain single or who are separated from their men-folk may deliberately masturbate quite frequently, while adolescent girls do so only in comparatively few cases.

Many young people are worried by the tales they hear of the alleged ill-effects of masturbation. Insanity, 'softening of the brain', venereal disease, consumption and impotence are all promised to the masturbator in one misguided pamphlet or another.

A little book entitled *Man and his Sexual Relations : embracing the Evils and Remedies of a Misguided Youth, Manhood and Married Life*, written by one John Thompson of Carlisle, assures readers that

this filthy, unnatural and destructive habit . . . is the most flagrant violation of the sexual law ; the foulest abuse of the sex organs ; and it is a practice fraught with the most disastrous consequences, both to the physical development, health, happi-



Don't be  
guided by  
this  
Do

## Sex Education

ness and even life of the individual. Words utterly fail to give an adequate conception of the evils resulting from its indulgence . . . it ruins the health of all sensitive and intelligent children who practice it. (Their undeveloped bodies begin to shrink and they grow lean and pale ; instead of making bone and muscle, and growing big and strong, their growth is stunted and there they remain only half finished. If they have inherited a strong constitution they may live to the age of manhood, but they will be weak, sickly and diseased ; their bones will be dry and brittle, their muscles flabby and weak, and their brain fibre will lack density and power . . . it is calculated by eminent authorities that semen is so concentrated in its vitalising properties, that one ounce of it is equal to forty ounces of blood . . . [the masturbator] must one day succumb, sinking probably into consumption, nervous prostration, insanity and the most deplorable physical and mental conditions. . . . Such individuals soon become incapable of having sexual intercourse ; and should they have courage enough left to get married, they find to their shame that they are impotent. . . . If the blood is impoverished by emissions, there will be a want of gastric juice in the stomach, and if the nerves are weak by the same dissipation, there will be a lack of action, and thus the food is imperfectly digested ; dyspepsia is the result and the body is insufficiently nourished. In like manner the intestines are dried up and inactive, and constipation is the result ; the heart beats languidly and the victim is troubled with chilly extremities, the lungs are inactive, the liver torpid, the kidneys obstructed . . . and the functions of life are only half performed, till at last the once magnificent machine — noble being, lies in utter ruin, a human wreck. ))

One would be inclined to regard this awe-inspiring catalogue, written in the last century, merely as an intensely amusing museum relic — were it not that it came into the author's hands in December 1943, apparently still circulating!

Were there any truth in these horrible allegations, we should be a people of venereally infected consumptive idiots — unless indeed, our species had been wiped out altogether by well-nigh universal impotence. But the truth of the matter is that unless indulged in to very great excess, mastur-



## In the Service of Youth

bation has no appreciable physical ill-effects. No more 'vital energy' is lost with the semen than when it is ejaculated in normal intercourse, and the pundit who professes to be able to distinguish the masturbator by his lassitude or his pimples must indeed have remarkable acuity. Our 'unco' guid' writers of scare pamphlets and purveyors of dire warnings, are either ignorant or insincere or both.

The trouble is not so much in the habit of masturbation — unless it takes hold to excess and, becoming preferred to normal intercourse, can legitimately be counted a perversion — as in the mental conflict which may arise from its condemnation. Feelings of guilt are likely to result, and shame and fear too, so that the masturbator loses confidence in himself, and perhaps develops definite neuroses. Masturbation cannot be prevented by condemnation or punishment — it can only be driven into deeper secrecy.

Despite all this, one cannot say that masturbation is a desirable practice. At the best it is a very incomplete expression of sexuality. It is a step ahead of the infantile fondling of the genitals, for emotional feelings have been added to the purely erotic sensation of pleasure. But the emotion is a self-centred one, and a poor thing by comparison with that selfless love of another which is the finest spiritual product of our sexual development. Thus the attitude of the adolescent to masturbation should be this — that the practice is one that most people have indulged in at one time or another, one that is fairly natural and has none of the evil results so often attributed to it, but that it is only an intermediate stage on the way to the full love of man and woman, and that it should therefore be left behind along with other juvenile habits.

In discussing the emotional complications of masturbation, sight should not be lost of certain quite simple physical facts of considerable practical importance. Whatever directs attention to the sex organs makes the practice of masturbation more likely (the fact that boys must handle their penis



## Sex Education

several times daily in order to urinate, is probably responsible for much masturbation) and young people may be helped to avoid a good deal of such direction as is due to physical factors. In some cases a tight foreskin causes considerable discomfort, and circumcision may be desirable. In others the accumulation of smegma (a somewhat cheese-like secretion) below the foreskin tends to cause irritation, and this can be avoided by drawing back the foreskin and washing the glans of the penis occasionally. Similarly in the case of girls, the external genitalia should be kept quite clean. Regular urination and defaecation should also be aimed at, for over-full bladder and bowel are liable to produce a tendency to masturbation. The habit is also encouraged by excessively hot baths and too warm or too heavy bedclothes, as it is by infrequently changed or tightly fitting and ill-ventilated underwear. All these tips should be given to young people, not only for their practical value, but also because the knowledge that there *are* some hopeful lines of attack does often prove of great moral value.

The most valuable thing adults can do is to provide young folk with a richer and fuller life, with more varied and more interesting activities, so that they are less likely to seek consolation in self-love.

### PETTING

Closely linked up with the problem of masturbation, in that both provide an outlet for the rising flood of sexual feeling, is that of 'necking and petting', or 'feeling' as young people sometimes call it. There is a wide range of activities comprised under this title. At one extreme, petting may be no more than kissing and semi-platonic caressing; at the other, it may be an intimate fondling only just stopping short of actual sexual intercourse. With this problem as with all others, it is the individual who must finally decide how far to go. But this much may be said — constant excitement without the wonderful release of joyful inter-



## In the Service of Youth

course can play havoc with one's nerves. Mutual sexual stimulation, stopping short of full sexual satisfaction, is likely to lead to trouble.

The complete sexual process involves tumescence (the engorgement of the erectile tissues of the sex organs with blood, as a result of love-making) and detumescence (the emptying of the same tissues in the sexual organs, as a result of orgasm). In the words of Havelock Ellis, "Tumescence is the piling-on of the fuel, detumescence is the leaping-out of the devouring flame. In tumescence the organism is slowly wound up and force is accumulated; in the act of detumescence the accumulated force is let go." This natural cycle cannot habitually be defied with impunity. Repeated tension, without following relief, perverts the ordinary sexual reflexes and may render difficult the subsequent successful completion of full intercourse. Elastic that is overstretched will lose its elasticity. This applies to both sexes. In the male, tumescence is more obvious; but the female genitals also have erectile tissue, which equally becomes engorged during sexual excitement. In the male, the detumescence, with its accompanying seminal emission, is dramatic and clear-cut, but the female also has her orgasm. Moreover, even if the mutual masturbation (for that is what 'necking and petting' often amount to) proceeds to the climax, things are still unsatisfactory. Reflexes become established which are not the normal ones, and in later life the man may suffer from a liability to premature ejaculation and the woman from an over-concentration on the clitoris which interferes with the full enjoyment of normal intercourse.

If masturbation is not to be encouraged and 'necking and petting' is to be discouraged, what is our answer to the young men and women who demand of us what is to be done in the face of the insistent demands of their healthily growing sexual urges? In the long run, no doubt, our answer must be so to alter society that marriage is economically possible for all its members, in the very early twenties. But that will



## Sex Education

take time, and meanwhile there are millions of young lives awaiting sexual fulfilment.

The truth is, that if young folk are to be asked to deny themselves immediate satisfaction and to wait for the future, they must be given reason to believe that they *have* a future, and a future worth the waiting. At the bottom of much of the sexual, as indeed of many other, troubles of to-day, is the lack of a really burning faith in anything. Let our people once feel a flaming sense of social purpose, and much of the problem will disappear.

### SUBLIMATION

A great deal of play is made with the word 'sublimation', and too often the suggestion is proffered that here is the magic formula to solve all youth's difficulties. The house-master tells his young charges to divert their energies to rugby football, the social worker advises joining a club, while the clergyman puts his faith in a more devoted attention to the affairs of the Church. All no doubt excellent activities in their way — but none a panacea for sexual troubles.

More hopeful is an explanation that there is nothing in any way unnatural or wrong in having sexual feelings and desires, any more than there is in enjoying sucking sweets ; but that just as strong-minded persons are not completely at the mercy of this latter taste, so they are able, and if they have any self-respect will make every endeavour, to keep their sex desires under control. In this way, the sexual urges of adolescence may be used as a means of building up character through self-discipline.

Sublimation is a good deal harder to achieve than to write or talk about, and indeed much of the writing and talking is not about real sublimation at all. In sublimation, sexuality is redirected into deep and fruitful channels, as it has been in the lives of many of the great spiritual leaders



## In the Service of Youth

of the past and is in the lives of many people to-day. But as Freud points out, "many people possess the capacity for sublimation only in a slight degree" and in any event "sublimation can never discharge more than a certain proportion of libido". Much of the so-called 'sublimation' is in reality a mere diversion of sexual potential into other, often undesirable channels, such as narcissism and neurosis. Discretion is therefore needed in using this word, and especially in prescribing it as a cure-all for troubled adolescents. And where the educator feels that sublimation may help, it is at least necessary to make specific suggestions as to the form it may take, and not leave the matter as a hopelessly vague counsel of perfection.

### SEX INSTRUCTION IN THE CLUB

At some time in the future, when all parents play their full part in sex education, and when no child leaves school without a fairly detailed knowledge of the facts of sex and a healthy attitude towards them, the task of the youth organisations will be made much easier. But at present, and probably for some years to come, our club members will be entering workshop and factory and office with little sex knowledge and less sex understanding. It is therefore urgently necessary, not only for youth leaders but also for industrial welfare workers and the like, to undertake much more in sex education than would ideally be their job. They need to help to sort out a whole mass of half-digested semi-fact and semi-fiction, to straighten out minds contorted by years lived in a hypocritical and smutty society, before they can really begin to build up a positive healthy attitude towards sex.

Those organisations which carry out, as part of their ordinary activities, instruction in first aid, child care, and personal and public health, could do a great deal by incorporating material relevant to sex which is at present, in most cases, conspicuously omitted. But the problem is a good deal



## Sex Education

more difficult where no such opportunities arise, and it is necessary to try to deal with the matter by *ad hoc* lectures.

This is a skilled job, and one which most youth workers may feel reluctant to tackle. For themselves, a course of instruction dealing with the facts of sex and the problems of adolescence will be useful. But for their club members they may prefer to utilise the services of peripatetic specialists. The objections to this method which apply in the school are not relevant here. It is quite usual for outsiders to visit the club to speak on all sorts of matters, and sex may well be one of them. In a course of three or four talks, illustrated by films and followed by questions and discussion, it is possible to clear up an enormous amount of misunderstanding, to give young people a fair modicum of knowledge and to set them working out for themselves the right lines of sex behaviour. It is the universal testimony of those who have attended such meetings, that the audiences are careful to listen, eager to question and ready to understand. The work that has been carried out in this field, reaching scores of thousands of adolescents in a few years, represents one of the major social and educational advances of the last decade. Here is a real field for the itinerant specialist, a field which few others can so fruitfully till.

## YOUTH COLLEGES

Not everything ~~can be covered in~~ three meetings, but with young people working long hours and coming to the club primarily for recreation, this is usually all the time that can be spared. Things should be different in the youth colleges of the future. As an integral part of the educational system, with adolescents who have not completely lost in their three or four years at work the ability to follow a continued course of study, something like adequate preparation for family life should be possible. All that the students have learned in the home and in the school could be co-



## In the Service of Youth

ordinated and rounded off and more added to it, the responsibilities of parenthood could be dealt with in a way quite impossible with younger children, and definite preparation for marriage and parenthood could be undertaken.

The future of the youth colleges, when they materialise, will lie largely with the teachers and youth leaders of to-day. They will have a glorious opportunity, and one can only hope that they will exploit it to the full.<sup>1</sup>

### THE CLUB PROGRAMME

It is not necessary to repeat in detail the case that has already been made for the schools, that much remains to be done after instruction has been imparted. By discussion and debate, views may be clarified and convictions strengthened. By dancing and rambling and swimming and cycling, bodies may be trained and minds invigorated. By music and drama and other creative activities, sexual energy may be given outlet.

But adolescents do not spend their whole time in the club. They come to it from the factory or the office or the shop, and here for many hours each day their attitude to sex is being influenced. Particularly in many workshops, the conversation of adults is coarse and vulgar in the extreme, and the young apprentice proves his manhood by imitating it. Sexual words and phrases themselves are neither good nor bad ; but if they are daily used with obscene intent, they soon become themselves obscene. It is not going to be an easy job to alter this state of affairs, but it is one to which all concerned

<sup>1</sup> They will be encouraged to do so by the McNair Report (Board of Education, *Report of the Committee appointed by the President of the Board of Education to consider the Supply, Recruitment and Training of Teachers and Youth Leaders*, H.M. Stationery Office, 1944. 2s.), published since the above was written. It comments: 'There are three matters which are of great significance for young people—religion, politics and sex. They are certain to arise, sooner or later, in any discussions with boys and girls on social conditions or their own physical, mental or spiritual problems. Leaders must therefore be prepared to face them.'



## Sex Education

for youth welfare must address themselves. Something can be done in a simple material way, such as the provision of lavatory and toilet accommodation which does not by its very crudeness simply invite besmirching. But there is more to it than that. The whole atmosphere surrounding young people, both at work and in club, needs cleansing and re-invigorating.

Young people can derive a good deal of help from a well-balanced club library. It should contain some books giving the facts of sex, to which the members may refer for further information. Other books should be available dealing with questions of behaviour and discussing (not preaching about) such matters as chastity, promiscuity, petting, engagement and marriage. Still others, not dealing specifically with sexual matters, can be helpful in the formation of right attitudes — there are novels and plays dealing with love as a deep and mature thing, not as a passing occupation for a ‘night in June under the moon by a blue lagoon’. Not all adolescents will read these books; but some will, and for them they should be available on precisely the same terms as the other volumes in the library. Let us have none of this ‘under-lock-and-key-come-and-ask-me’ business. Sexual interest is normal in young people, and they should not need to take abnormal steps in order to satisfy it.

### MIXED CLUBS

The mixed club has great advantages in sex education. The general arguments in their favour are the same as those for co-educational schools, but reinforced by the fact that marriage is several years nearer and the need to understand the other sex correspondingly greater. Advocates of segregated clubs sometimes attempt to meet this need by occasional socials to which ‘girl friends’ and ‘boy friends’ may be invited. But many adolescents are still feeling their way, and are by no means ready to commit themselves to one partner



## In the Service of Youth

or even in a position to invite one for the evening. And how may they pick out one from many, unless they have plenty of opportunity to meet the many? In the well-run mixed club, while dances and games undoubtedly provide erotic stimulation, the members have a chance to learn to judge each other not just as males and females but as *persons*. Johnny Jones may be a wonderful dancer — but has he other interests like mine and does he join in readily in washing dishes or does he feel that ‘that’s a girls’ job’? Mary Smith has a cute little smile and shows skill in the application of cosmetics — but does she know how to give and take and is she the sort of person I should like to share my whole life with? The members of a mixed club have the chance to learn the answers to these questions.

Naturally there are difficulties, for all new opportunities bring new problems. There is the fact that usually the younger boys will not particularly wish to mix with the girls, and for much of the time will be much happier in purely male company. But even within mixed clubs, boys and girls may retain their identity and have their own separate activities. As Josephine Brew has remarked, “when one orders a mixed grill, one does not expect to be served with minced meat”.

There is also, it must be admitted, the possibility of sexual misbehaviour bringing disrepute on the club. But in most cases the young people concerned would have misbehaved had they belonged to separate clubs or to no club at all — the only difference would have been that the leader would probably have remained in ignorance of it and would have had no opportunity of helping to set things right again. The question is : which is the more important, the club’s ‘good reputation’ or the welfare of the young people whom clubs exist to serve? Leaders who are over-sensitive about their club’s reputation may be thankful if its members are less penetrating critics than the girl who, looking back on her schooldays, commented :



## Sex Education

Although it was a co-education school the girls and boys were never allowed to mix. Even in a mixed form the girls and boys were not expected to talk to each other. Friendships were actually forbidden and severe punishments meted out for breaches of this rule. The reason for forbidding girls and boys to walk to and from school together was that it would be bad for the name of the school.

Organisations such as the Woodcraft Folk, which take boys and girls to camp together, where they wash in the same stream and sleep separated by two thin walls of canvas, do not run up against sexual troubles. On the contrary, by sharing life together, young men peeling potatoes and washing dishes equally with young women and young women pitching tents and felling trees with young men, each comes the more to understand and respect the other. And this mutual understanding and respect is essential if sexual relations are to be of the best. Even those who do not accept the validity of his bio-theological argument, may agree with St. Augustine's conclusion when he said :

If God had meant woman to rule over man, He would have taken her out of Adam's head. Had he destined her to be his slave — from his feet. But God took the woman out of the man's side, for He made her to be a helpmate and an equal to him.



## Chapter Seven

# In Search of Knowledge

And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.

JESUS OF NAZARETH

### ANSWERING QUESTIONS

THOSE who have worked for long in the field of sex education have found that their finest tutors have been the taught. Time and again the carefully laid plans of the educator have had to be amended in the light of the reaction of the educated. The suggestions being put forward to-day are very different from those propounded (in some cases by the same people) twenty years ago, and this is partly because a successful educational technique must be largely guided by the expressed interests of those for whose benefit it is intended.

It is well, therefore, having considered the suggested plans for sex education, to pause a while before acting on them, in order to see what are the points upon which our pupils spontaneously seek information and guidance. In this chapter there are therefore presented questions propounded by people of different ages, with suggestions for methods of answering them and actual specimen answers to a selected few. It should be emphasised that these are specimens only, and it scarcely needs saying that they are certainly not intended to be repeated as they stand. The particular answer required will be different in every specific situation, and it is not possible here to do more than indicate a general compass direction, leaving the individual traveller to select one out of the innumerable possible footpaths.

One thing, however, is essential. If a child is led to suppose that its questions will be answered (as one hopes



## Sex Education

it will be), then it must *never* be made to feel that a particular question should not have been asked. The adult may well wish that it had not been asked, but the child cannot be held responsible for the adult's embarrassment. The answer given may well be incomplete, but it should never contain falsehood or be completely withheld or given with obvious reluctance, whatever the difficulty in framing it.

It is, indeed, precisely because it is often so difficult to think out the best answers on the spur of the moment, that it is necessary to prepare them well in advance. Clearly one cannot foresee every possibility ; but the questions listed in this chapter have been selected from a large collection, and the reader who has worked out how to answer them is not likely to meet very many unexpected difficulties.

### QUESTIONS IN THE HOME

The first questions with sexual implications will usually be asked before the children have gone to school, and on their reception by the parents a great deal depends. The child has no false modesty or embarrassment in these early years — not at any rate unless its parents have evoked them. It will refer to its sex organs in precisely the same way as to its arms or legs, and will enquire about the birth of babies as it will about the making of gingerbread men. If the parents put themselves into a similar child-like frame of mind, and answer the questions as they have been asked, in all innocence, the children, one may hope, will grow up regarding sex with childish wisdom as a normal part of life.

It would be foolish to pretend that all of the present generation of parents will find this an easy thing to do. In many and perhaps most cases, their own early questions will either have been answered by lies or not answered at all ; they will not have had proper teaching at school or adequate preparation for marriage ; and — not surprisingly — they may, with the best will in the world, find it difficult to be as



## In Search of Knowledge

honest in their answers as they would wish. But as many parents have discovered, answering children's questions about sex is rather like taking a cold bath. One tends to dither on the edge, but once the plunge is taken, there is nothing but exhilaration. The response of the child is so delightfully natural and unembarrassed, that the parent also feels a purification.

### BODILY STRUCTURE

During their first few years children are extremely interested in their own bodies and those of other people. This leads to the propounding of many queries with a sexual content ; but it should be realised that they are by no means always (and perhaps not even often) motivated by a sexual interest. The age at which such questions are asked varies a good deal from one child to another. They may arise as early as two or three years of age in some cases, and not until several years later in others. The questions may be answered in a perfectly straightforward way, just as one answers other queries about railway engines or aeroplanes. The sort of question that may be expected is indicated by the following examples :

Why aren't I like Derek ? [Girl, seeing brother after bath.]  
Why doesn't Joan have one of these ? [Boy, indicating penis.]  
What are these for ? [Either sex, indicating own nipples.]

It is obviously impossible — and if it were possible it is undesirable — to enter at this stage upon an elaborate exposition of sexual dimorphism and the secondary sexual characters. The first question is answered sufficiently for the time being by the comment —

Well, Derek's a boy and you're a girl.

and the second by —

Oh, girls don't have a penis. They have a vulva instead.



## Sex Education

It is perfectly true that these ' explanations ' are not genuine explanations at all, and it would take no very erudite logician to tear them to pieces. They are in fact merely generalisations ; but at this stage probably all that is necessary is that the feature noticed by the child about a specific person — usually itself — should be thus generalised.

The third question would, of course, require a different answer according as it comes from a girl or a boy. To the former it could be replied :

When you grow up and have a baby, your breasts will make milk and the baby will be able to drink it.

while the latter could merely be told :

They're no use, really.

Naturally, things will not invariably work out quite so simply and children will not always be satisfied with a single-sentence answer. Often the reply will provoke a further question, and quite a lengthy conversation may sometimes develop. No rigid rules can be laid down, for each different situation calls for different handling. All that can be done is to avoid imparting any atmosphere of embarrassment, to satisfy the child's curiosity, and to refrain from forcing on it detailed information that it cannot assimilate and does not desire.

Rather similar are the questions arising out of observation of the distinctive toilet techniques of the two sexes. Sometimes actual questions are asked, sometimes merely statements made which disguise a query and may well be treated as such. In mixed families the differences between the sexes will probably be noticed quite early in life, while only children or those with no sibling of the opposite sex may not refer to the matter until they mix with others at school. A few typical phrasings follow :

Why does Anne sit down when she wees ? [Boy to adult.]  
Why doesn't John sit on the pot ? [Girl to adult.]



## In Search of Knowledge

Hello, what's that you've got there? [Girl to boy, pointing to penis.]

Queries of this sort should be answered in accordance with the nature of the child's interest — that is, as referring to the urinary and not the sexual function. The first two questions could be simply enough answered along some such lines as these :

Well, that's the way girls *do* wee.

and

Because boys wee standing up.

An adult overhearing the third query might well enter into the conversation with the casual comment :

That? Oh, that's called a 'penis'. Boys have a penis instead of a vulva.

Here, again, 'the explanation' is scarcely an explanation at all — but does that really matter? The important thing is that the child should feel that there is nothing undesirable about these interests, and that questions are welcomed.

### ORIGIN OF BABIES

Most youngsters delight in babies and are extremely interested in their origin. There may be an apparently spontaneous query in the classical form :

Where do babies come from?

but more often the question is led up to by a series of queries arising from some specific occurrence, such as the arrival of a new baby in the neighbourhood. An example of such a conversation follows :

Mummy, Pamela says they've got a new baby!

Have they? How lovely!

Yes, she says it's ever so fat. It came last week.

Oh, did it?

[Then a brief pause.]



## Sex Education

Mummy, Pamela says the doctor brought it in his bag.

Did she? D'you think he did?

Well, I don't know. [Pause.] Where *do* babies come from, mummy?

In other cases it is the delivery of a litter to a domestic pet that provides the occasion, along some such lines as the following:

Daddy! Come and look in Fluffy's basket! She's got three lovely little kittens! They're ever so small.

Has she really? Let's have a look. [Examines litter.] Yes, they *are* nice, aren't they?

Well, where did she get them from, d'you think?

Oh, she grew them.

Grew them, daddy? How?

They grew inside her until they were big enough to come out.

[Pause while child considers.]

And do puppies grow inside their mummies as well?

Yes, of course.

Well, what about little piggy-wiggies?

They're born that way too.

[Another pause.]

And what about *real* babies, daddy? How are they born?

But however the question arises, it should be answered as simply and as casually as it is asked. The words used might be:

Babies? They grow inside their mummies.

And that may end the matter for the time being. Another child may be less easily satisfied and may probe rather deeper — and as deep as it probes, the truth should be revealed. A typical conversation with a five-year-old follows:

Whereabout inside?

In here. [Mother indicating her abdomen.] In a place called the 'womb'.

Oh! [Pause while child considers the matter.]

Well, mummy, how does the baby get there?

I've told you, it grows there.



## In Search of Knowledge

It is difficult to discern any advantage in such a procedure. The substitutes are no simpler of diction than the correct terms and they are liable to convey false impressions which later on have to be corrected. Thus to young children, who think very concretely, the idea 'nest' is usually of something built by birds of twigs, mud, etc., and situate generally in the branches of trees; the idea 'house' is of a structure of bricks and mortar with doors, rooms and a roof, and a chimney from which smoke issues; while a 'seed' is an orange seed or a melon seed or a carrot seed. It is the adult mind which makes the abstraction that allows 'nest' and 'house' to denote simply 'safe place', and 'seed' to denote 'something that grows under suitable conditions'. Similar considerations apply to 'seed bag' and many other euphemistic so-called simplifications. Why then force adult abstractions on the concrete minds of children? Far better familiarise them from the start with the scientific terms.

### THE FATHER'S ROLE

It is interesting to observe that whereas mating, fertilisation, pregnancy and birth occur in that order, children usually display an interest in these processes in the reverse order. Questions about birth and pregnancy along some such lines as those indicated above, tend to be asked first of all. It is usually only later that the child enquires about the role of the father, and thus elicits explanations of fertilisation and copulation.

The amount of information to be imparted will naturally depend upon the precise circumstances in which the query has arisen and the degree of intellectual, emotional and social development of the child. It is a mistake to use a simple question as an excuse for delivering a biological lecture, and some published 'specimen answers' give the impression of being replies to examination questions rather than to children's enquiries. There is perhaps as much danger in



## Sex Education

forcing excessive information onto a child as there is in giving it too little, and probably the safest plan is to give quite short answers, and to leave it to the questioner to pursue the matter by further queries to whatever stage is desired. A fairly typical conversation with a boy of six runs along the following lines :

Mummy, why do babies have daddies ?

Well, you wouldn't like to be without a daddy, would you ?

No, but what use are they ? I mean, why d'you have to have a daddy ?

Well, a mummy can't make a baby by herself, you know. Daddy has to help as well.

Does he ? I thought a baby grew from an egg.

So it does. But mummy's egg won't grow unless daddy makes it grow.

Makes it grow ? How d'you mean ?

Well, daddy makes little things like eggs too. Only they're so tiny you can't see them. They're called 'sperm'. And a baby doesn't begin to grow until one of daddy's sperm joins with one of mummy's eggs. That's why babies have to have daddies.

Oh, I see.

The conversation will in some cases not go so far ; in others it will go much farther. In general, it should go on just so long as and no longer than is necessary to satisfy the child's immediate curiosity. But sooner or later the time will come when the basic issue of copulation can no longer be avoided. It may follow directly on the explanation of fertilisation, or may arise anew much later, but eventually, in one form or another, the question will be posed. The child should already have been familiarised with most of the necessary technical vocabulary, and if this has been done, the discussion may follow somewhat as follows :

Well, how does he give her his sperm ?

That's rather a long story. D'you know where the sperms are made ?

No. Where ?

They're made in the father's testes and they pass out along his



## In Search of Knowledge

great deal from one individual to another. The result is that one girl of ten will ask questions to which another of five knows the answer, and a boy of fourteen will be worried by problems similar to those of another of eighteen.

This means that in answering questions in class, great discretion is needed. Sometimes a child will betray by its query a degree of ignorance which might easily make it a butt for its classmates unless the teacher answers sympathetically and in such a way as to convey the impression that there is nothing unreasonable about the question's having been asked. On other occasions a particularly knowledgeable or mature child will ask a question which, if answered fully, might encourage precocity in its classmates, and it may be necessary to give only a superficial immediate answer and wait until an opportunity arises for the rest to be told in private.

Occasionally a child may, owing to its early upbringing, have such an emotional resistance to the facts of sex that even when truth is told it will not immediately accept it, and care must be taken not to injure the child by brutally forcing it immediately to discard its comforting myth. A good example of the way in which this type of situation may be dealt with, is provided by the notes of a Newcastle teacher :

Last week in a class of 9 and 10-year-olds, I was reading Père Castor's ' Mischief the Squirrel '. In the story he and his wife made a nest because they knew that babies were going to be born.

Q. How did the baby squirrels come ?

A. From the mummy's inside. The same way as you.

[The child who asked this already knew, I know, and was ' trying me on '.]

Q. Does a baby have to be cut out ?

[This sort of thing seems to worry many children.]

A. No, it is pushed out.

Q. Did I come out head first ?

A. Probably.

[A member of the class then danced out on to the floor and



## Sex Education

demonstrated how she would crouch 'to have a baby'.]

*Another Child.* I was found under the towel-rail and I climbed into mummy's bed.

A. Well, that was different from the usual way.

The rest of the class were kindly tolerant and made no remarks but continued the discussion of squirrels.

So far as pupils of over ten years are concerned, it is the experience of all who have worked in this field, that so soon as the children have achieved the confidence that their queries will be answered — and unless that confidence is achieved, very little progress will be made — questions pour out in a veritable flood. No doubt the flood will abate in years to come, as more and more parents satisfy their children's natural curiosity about sex, but at present it must be reckoned with. Many of the questions, one might feel, should have been asked years earlier; many, years later — but if asked, they must be answered as well as may be. This qualification is made, since the queries are often very probing ones and every parent and teacher cannot be expected to know all the answers. But it is futile to try to cloak one's ignorance, for children are very quick to see through any such attempt. The wise thing to do is to admit "I'm afraid I don't know," and to add "but I'll try to find out and tell you later." An honest confession of ignorance is not nearly so damaging to prestige as a pretence of knowledge — indeed, it has often been observed that children place all the more confidence in the replies to those questions that *are* answered, when they observe that there is no hesitation in admitting ignorance where it exists.

Probably no teacher will be able to avoid occasional admissions of ignorance, for although it is not very difficult for any reasonably intelligent adult to become fairly familiar with the main facts of sex in humans, even the biologist can scarcely hope to be able to answer all the questions that may be asked about reproduction in other organisms. But forewarned is forearmed, so some common questions in this



## In Search of Knowledge

category, asked by children of 9-14 years, are listed below :

How do whales reproduce ?

[*ditto* : Worms, elephants, giraffe, fish, snakes, tortoises, platypus, tomato, grasses, etc.]

Do pigs have a cord ?

Why can't mules have young ?

Does an amoeba die like us ?

Why does a hen lay so many eggs ?

[*i.e.* Domestic hen in comparison with wild birds.]

Do animals have monthly periods ?

How does an animal produce young without help ?

[*i.e.* Without doctor or midwife.]

Where does the young come out in a four-legged animal ?

How long does it take kittens to form inside the mother ?

[*ditto* : puppies, pigs, calves, rats, lions, etc.]

When a male dog is on a bitch's back is it passing sperms ?

Is it possible for a cat and dog to breed together ?

Do humans mate in spring like other animals ?

Do cows lay eggs, or how do they get their babies ?

What is a 'freemartin' ?

Questions of this nature are asked by children of both sexes and all ages, so details of the particular questioners are not included above.

The teacher who takes the trouble to find out the answers to such questions will not only serve his pupils well, but will also discover a fascinating new land for exploration.

### IMMATURE PHRASING

One must always be prepared for children's questions to be posed in such a way as to be superficially humorous or shocking. But only superficially. It is generally merely that the child has an inadequate vocabulary or is inexperienced in phrasing, and great care must be taken to keep a straight face and to avoid giving any appearance of amusement or disapproval. Perhaps it is worth while to list a few such questions which have actually been asked, so that those



## Sex Education

new to this work may know what to expect. Where the meaning of the query is not obvious (and sometimes it is extremely obscure) it is indicated in brackets, as elicited by discussion with the questioner.

How does the husband sperm his wife? (*Girl, 11+*)

What cause still-born? (*Boy, 13+*)

What is the cause of holy matrimony? (*Girl, 11+*)

[i.e. Why has mating — a biological function — become linked up with religion, and why is it usually considered wrong to mate outside marriage?]

How does the sperm pass into the female? Is any exercise necessary? (*Boy, 14+*)

[i.e. Is mating merely a matter of placing the penis in the vagina, or is there movement to and fro?]

What causes vein stiffening in the penis? (*Boy, 13+*)

[i.e. Stiffening in which the veins become prominent.]

What part does the male do to increase the population? (*Boy, 13+*)

[Precise meaning not elicited. Questioner seemed vague, but apparently had not fully realised that parthenogenesis does not occur in humans.]

Can a baby develop by itself or must it be fertilised? (*Girl, 13+*)

[i.e. Does parthenogenesis ever occur in humans?]

How is a calf born? Did the cow just look round one minute and it wasn't there and look round the next minute and it was? (*Girl, 10+*)

[i.e. A whole complex of questions — how long does the cow's labour last?, how does it do without anaesthetics, doctor or midwife, etc.?, how is it that the cow seems quite placid and unconcerned after calf has arrived?, how is it that a calf seems so well-developed shortly after birth, in contrast to a human baby?]

Is there only certain times when a male can fertilise a female as there is only certain times it happens in a female? (*Girl, 13+*)

[i.e. Is there any periodicity in the production of sperm, corresponding to the menstrual cycle?]

Why are some babies born funny? (*Boy, 13+*)

[i.e. Mentally defective.]

Why are some men 'cissy'? (*Boy, 13+*)



## In Search of Knowledge

[i.e. Why do some men have rather feminine emotional characteristics ?]

If a woman doesn't have a baby, can something be done to her ?  
(*Boy, 13 +*)

[i.e. Can female sterility be successfully treated ?]

Could a baby be strangled during birth ? (*Girl, 12 +*)

[i.e. By getting caught up with the navel cord.]

Does it hold you back if you are double-jointed ? (*Boy, 13 +*)

[Questioner was aware that copulation often involves rather vigorous movement, but was under the misapprehension that there is a bone in the penis, and wondered whether a double-jointed person might not find the penis failing to remain rigid !]

Perhaps one warning should be uttered. The interpretations given to the above questions are those which applied in the *particular cases recorded*, and it may by no means be assumed that identically phrased queries would bear the same interpretations in all cases. It is necessary for the teacher to elicit the inner meaning by tactful probing on each individual occasion, and to frame the answer accordingly.

## MYTHS AND FABLES

The number of old wives' tales about sex and reproduction which still circulate widely is really astonishing. Year after year, in town and country alike, there keep cropping up in the classroom questions which quite evidently reflect such beliefs or half-beliefs. Usually all that is needed in reply is a brief denial of the falsehood and exposition of the truth, but matters are not always so simple. Sometimes beliefs of this nature are so deeply held that the teacher's explanation is not readily accepted or perhaps is accepted formally, but with obvious mental reservations. Further action then will depend upon the importance of the error. If it is really a matter of little concern, a shrug of the shoulders and a comment, " Well, what I've told you is the truth," is perhaps the simplest way of disposing of the matter and getting on with something more important. If, however, the belief is one



## Sex Education

which is likely to cause mental distress or issue in harmful behaviour, it will be wise to devote a good deal of time to it and not to rest until it is thoroughly eradicated.

One group of misapprehensions relates to the mechanism of conception, for surprising as it may seem to some, there are still children who imagine that pregnancy can result from actions other than sexual intercourse. Such a belief lies behind the following questions :

Can conception happen when a man and woman kiss ? (*Girl, 13 +*)

If a woman just walks out with a man, can she have a baby ? (*Girl, 12 +*)

Does the woman get pregnant if you just lie down with her ? (*Boy, 13 +*)

[*N.B.*—Probably arises from the euphemistic use of 'lie with' in religious texts.]

Another group of fables has collected about the period of pregnancy, and in particular about ways in which maternal experiences during this period are said to impress themselves on the child. Examples of queries in this group are :

If the expectant mother is frightened by anything, will it affect the baby ? (*Girl, 13 +*)

What happens if a woman gets a shock while she is pregnant ? (*Boy, 13 +*)

If a dog bites a woman while she is carrying, does it hurt the baby ? (*Boy, 13 +*)

Why is it that sometimes before a baby is born a mother gets a hit or bumps herself and the baby gets the mark in the same place as the mother when it is born ? (*Girl, 13 +*)

[Closely related also are the numerous questions about the origin of birthmarks.]

The third great group of misconceptions is connected with menstruation. Questions betraying false ideas on this score naturally come in the main from girls. Here are two specimen questions from girls of 13-15 years :

Is it true that if you handle meat during the monthly period it goes bad ?



## In Search of Knowledge

If you are 16 and monthly periods have not started, does the blood go to the head and make you consumptive ?

Among boys particularly, there circulate a large number of falsehoods about the alleged evil effects of masturbation, and questions on this and seminal emission crop up frequently. Among children of school age, however, it is only rarely that girls are worried about masturbation, and consequently questions from them on this topic are infrequent. The type of question that may be asked is indicated below, although if there has been adequate explanation in advance from the teacher, questions are noticeably fewer :

*Boys (13-15 years) :*

Does self-abuse make you lose blood ?

[ditto : Lose strength, lose weight, etc.]

Does masturbation cause insanity ?

[ditto : Consumption, venereal disease, paralysis, pimples, etc.]

If you do it, will you be able to marry ?

Boys often fail to distinguish clearly between masturbation and seminal emission, and it is therefore necessary, before answering questions, to make quite certain which is intended.

Venereal diseases also are the subject of many extraordinary misapprehensions, doubts and worries. Naturally the topic is more frequently raised by older groups, but even in their early 'teens, children (and perhaps especially boys) come across such tales, and raise them in questions. Typical examples are :

*Boys (13-15 years) :*

Can you get venereal disease from the bite of a camel ?

Can it be cured by taking communion ? (*sic* !)

[N.B.—The questioner was very confused and vague, but the line of thought leading to this extraordinary misapprehension appears to have been somewhat as follows : venereal disease ; hence discharge from penis ; hence masturbation, which also produces ' discharge ' from penis ; hence, by common misuse of word, onanism ;



## Sex Education

hence, by common use of phrase, ' sin against Holy Ghost ' ; hence possibility of cure by taking communion.]

It will probably be many years before such myths are completely eradicated from our society and thus before they cease to show up in classroom queries. But it is, at any rate, reasonable to hope that one or two generations of effective home and school teaching will greatly shake the tenacity of their rooting.

### MATING, PREGNANCY AND BIRTH

It is both impossible and undesirable to attempt in one's classroom description of mating, fertilisation and pregnancy, to deal with every aspect of these matters ; but children will often ask questions of detail. In many cases the queries are simply an expression of intellectual curiosity without any sort of emotional content, and a perfectly straightforward factual reply is all that is called for. Such questions are :

*Girls (11-13 years) :*

- If you mate, how do you know if you will bear a child ?
- What does the mother eat during the nine months ?
- Should you have strenuous exercise when expecting ?
- What stages do babies pass through before they are born ?

*Boys (13+ years) :*

- Why aren't humans born from eggs ?
- [i.e. Externally developing eggs.]
- If two men go with a woman, how do you know who is the father ?
- If a woman smokes and drinks, will it hurt the baby ?

*Girls (13-15 years) :*

- In what position does fertilisation take place ?
- What is a premature born baby ?
- Does a woman have a child every time she unites with a man ?
- What happens to a woman who unites with a man when pregnant ?



## In Search of Knowledge

- Do the sperm enter the female during periods ?
- What happens when there is no egg for the sperm to fertilise ?
- Does the male know if the female is expecting a baby ?
- How long does it take the sperm to reach the egg ?
- Does a baby move in the uterus ?

Children seem in many cases to have a quite inadequate appreciation of the variability of humans, and in particular of the sexual organs and processes. Their questions often betray an assumption that all people have sex organs of the same size and sex relations of the same frequency and duration. Examples of this type of question are :

*Girls (11 + years) :*

- How long do the male and female keep union ? ✓
- How many times does the male pass sperm, and for how long ?

*Boys (13 + years) :*

- How long must the penis be in the vagina ?
- How big does the penis grow ?
- How long is the vagina ?

*depends upon size of man  
It should be  
about 5 in  
long & 1 1/2 in  
thick*

*Girls (13 + years) :*

- How long does it take a male to pass sperm to a female ? *1/2 hour*
- How many times does sexual intercourse take place before the egg is fertilised ?

It is obviously impossible to give clear-cut answers to such questions, precisely because we are unique beings and not mass-produced identical robots. What is required is an explanation of this fact, with an estimate of the range of variability and an assurance that there is no one norm to which all must conform.

It is clear from the questions that crop up among secondary school children that the earlier explanations they have received as to the manner of birth have lacked concreteness. They may be aware that the baby grows within the mother, but have only the vaguest ideas about the structure of the female sex organs and the actual birth-



## Sex Education

channel. It is evident that this vagueness is the cause of much anxiety, for children tend to fill up the gaps in their knowledge with the wildest imaginings — and often imaginings of an unpleasant nature. Three common misapprehensions are that the child is born via the rectum, via the urinary exit and via the navel. The actual form of the question varies, but these specimens from girls of 13 + years are fairly typical :

Is it true that the baby comes out of the back passage ? ~~Yes~~ <sup>No</sup>

Is the baby born through the same passage as waste water is excreted ? ~~Yes~~

If the baby comes out of the stomach, do you have to put stitches in ? ~~Yes~~

[N.B.—Seems to betray over-delicate parental instruction, in which 'stomach' has been used instead of 'womb', and details of birth carefully omitted.]

Questions of this nature may also be posed by boys, but to them the matter is naturally not one of such pressing importance. If lessons have been given in the school, such queries should not arise, for the instruction should have been sufficiently explicit to remove all misapprehensions. Naturally one does not go into elaborate detail, but it should at least be explained that when the nine months have elapsed, the womb begins a series of periodic contractions and that these gain in force until the child is forced out through the opening of the womb into the vagina, and thus to the exterior. It should also be explained that the navel cord is carefully ligatured and cut, and the nature of the afterbirth needs a brief explanation.

This is probably all that is necessary for class instruction, but one must be prepared for further questions, of which the following are specimens :

How does the doctor know when the baby will arrive ? (*Girl, 11 +*)

When you think you are going to have a baby, how soon do you stay in bed ? (*Girl, 13 +*)



## In Search of Knowledge

Does a baby have waste products when inside the mother ?  
If so, how does it dispose of them ? (*Girl, 13 +*)

How long does it take for the baby to come from inside to outside ? (*Girl, 11 +*)

Where is the cord of a baby fixed to in the mother's body ?  
(*Boy, 11 +*)

What are the preparations when a baby is born ? (*Girl, 13 +*)

Do you have to smack a baby when it is born ? (*Boy, 12 +*)

Which part of the baby is born first ? (*Boy, 11 +*)

What happens if an arm comes out first ? (*Girl, 12 +*)

Is it true that babies are sometimes born in a mask ? (*Boy, 13 +*)

[*N.B.*—Probably refers to the amnion.]

How does a doctor help with the birth of a baby ? (*Girl, 13 +*)

Do you believe in chloroform ? (*Girl, 14 +*)

Children often show a considerable interest in the welfare of the child after birth, and in particular in breast feeding. As would be expected, such questions tend to come particularly from girls, but not exclusively so — boys also are interested in the matter. Typical queries are listed below :

### *Girls (13–15 years) :*

How is milk in the breast gained for feeding offspring ?

For how long do you have to feed babies from the breast ?

Can a mother tell when her breasts are empty, and if so, how ?

### *Boys (13 + years) :*

How does a mother breast-feed triplets and quins ?

Do a man's nipples ever make milk ?

In answering questions of this sort, a good deal can be done to encourage that affection for babies which most children have, and to build up a picture of the need of a baby for its parents and of the joy it brings to them. This may have no immediate influence on behaviour, but perhaps a few years later it may help to reinforce belief in the value of family life.



# Sex Education

## HEREDITY AND MULTIPLE BIRTHS

Most children are interested in problems of heredity, and display their interest by numerous questions. Many of these can be answered on the basis of a very slight acquaintance with genetics, but some are very searching and a few will puzzle even the expert biologist. Typical questions are :

Why are kittens so often unlike the mother? (*Girl, 11+*)

What is it that makes children so much like their parents?  
(*Girl, 13+*)

Why do people have mental defective babies when they are quite normal themselves? (*Girl, 14+*)

Can you inherit consumption? (*Boy, 13+*)  
[ditto : Cancer, venereal diseases, insanity, etc.]

How is it I'm like my father when I grew in my mother?  
(*Boy, 13+*)

What would happen if a white woman went with a native?  
(*Boy, 13+*)

[N.B.—Native presumably = black, brown or yellow man.]

It is virtually impossible to answer questions of this nature without at least some explanation of the chromosomal and genic basis of heredity. With young children, a useful analogy is that of two boxes (the sex cells) each containing a bag (the nucleus) in which there are several strings (the chromosomes) of beads (the genes). Like all analogies, this is by no means perfect, but it has been found to help pupils to visualise the mechanism of heredity, especially if actualised by easily prepared models. Probably the most important points to convey are that both parents contribute equally to the hereditary endowment of the child ; that once conceived, the mother can exercise no influence on the child's heredity, although her health may nevertheless affect its development by its influence on the pre-natal environment ; and that only certain types of disease and abnormality can be inherited.



## In Search of Knowledge

A special case of hereditary endowment which invariably leads to questions, is that of sex determination. For example:

How does an egg develop into a boy or a girl? (*Girl, 13+*)

Can a mother choose whether she wants a boy or a girl?  
(*Girl, 11+*)

Can you tell before birth whether a baby is a boy or a girl?  
(*Girl, 12+*)

What decides the sex of a child? (*Boy, 13+*)

Why do some women have all boys and no girls? (*Boy, 13+*)

There are several fairly widespread fallacies on this matter (*e.g.* male-producing and female-producing eggs liberated alternately from the two ovaries), so it is specially necessary to ensure that the correct explanation is clearly comprehended.

Multiple births are a never-failing object of curiosity. Twins (of both types), 'Siamese' twins, triplets, 'quads', 'quins' — children want to know about them all. And since their curiosity seems to be not the least bit morbid but thoroughly healthy, answers should be as full as the capacity of the children and the knowledge of the teacher permits — the latter being often the limiting factor. Here are some specimen questions, which show what may be expected:

*Girls (11+ years):*

What happens when you have twins?

How are twins placed in the womb?

Can you tell if a woman is going to have twins?

Why are twins not born together in some cases?

What makes twins look so alike?

[*N.B.*—Applies only to identical twins.]

What makes twins both boys or both girls?

[*N.B.*—As above.]

*Boys (13+ years):*

What causes Siamese twins?

How do you get quads?

How many children can a woman have at a time?

Can cows have twins?

Which animal has most young at a time?



## Sex Education

*Girls (13 + years) :*

- Does it need a double lot of sperm to make twins ?
- How do twins occur if only one egg is released a month ?
- When twins are born, do two sperms swim up the vagina and fertilise two egg cells ?
- Please will you tell us about the Dionne quins ?

### MENSTRUATION AND SEMINAL EMISSION

As would be expected, girls ask many questions in connection with menstruation, but enquiries come from boys also. The boy and the pre-adolescent girl tend to show a general intellectual curiosity, while the girl who has actually reached the menstrual stage naturally poses questions of a more personal and practical nature. Specimen questions are :

*Girls (11 + years) :*

- What is the meaning of the monthly blood and what causes it ?
- At what age do you begin ?
- How old are you when the monthly period finishes ?
- How do you know when you are going to have it for the first time ?

*Boys (11 + years) :*

- Why do monthly periods stop ?
- [i.e. Menopause.]
- Does a woman have periods while the baby is coming ?
- What is 'Tampax' ?

*Girls (13-15 years) :*

- What do you do if periods are not regular ?
- How is it I did not have them every 28 days at the start ?
- If you have severe pains, what should you do ?
- Why such a loss of good blood in a woman's life ?
- What kind of sanitary towels are best ?
- What is the meaning of the 'whites' ?
- If you get married and it is your period week, does it matter ?
- When you say change your towels regular, how regular do you mean ?



## In Search of Knowledge

In answering questions on menstruation, it is necessary to remember that most girls have heard the most outrageous old wives' tales on the subject and great care needs to be taken in clearing these up. Another point is that many girls have a faint feeling of resentment at the inconvenience to which their sex is subject, and every effort should therefore be made to encourage them to welcome the onset of menstruation as indicating their approach to maturity and to the joy of having babies of their own. An opportunity to remove this feeling of 'sex discrimination' is often afforded by a question such as the following, to which a suggested answer is given :

Do men have any particular periods like women ? (*Girl, 13+*)

Well, of course, they don't actually have periods, because they are unable to bear babies and so menstruation is unnecessary for them. But just as girls start producing eggs and begin menstruation as they grow older, boys start producing sperm. Millions of them are made, and ever so often the semen (the liquid containing the sperm) overflows. This usually happens at night, so it is known as a 'night loss'. But it doesn't happen regularly each month — it takes place at intervals without any definite period, but sometimes as often as once every week or fortnight.

Questions on seminal emission are much rarer than those on menstruation. The answers are fairly straightforward, but it is perhaps worth mentioning that the queries are quite likely to be somewhat cryptic. For example :

Does it matter if your pyjamas get wet ? (*Boy, 13+*)

Is there anything wrong in having to change your pyjamas ? (*Boy, 14+*)

Most of the above queries could perfectly well be answered in a mixed class ; but if particularly intimate questions are asked, it may be wise to give only a superficial answer and to raise the point again for fuller discussion with the individual or individuals directly concerned.



# Sex Education

## AGE OF PARENTHOOD

When the matter of human reproduction is being dealt with, there often arise questions relating to the age of the parents. These questions fall into three classes. The first is concerned with the minimum age, the queries being often actuated by press reports of girls (usually in America !) of twelve or thirteen, or even younger, who have had babies. Examples are :

Once periods have started is a person old enough to have a baby ? (*Girl, 13+*)

[*N.B.*—The onset of ovulation may occur a good deal later than that of menstruation.]

Can you have a baby before starting your periods ? (*Girl, 13+*)

How old must a girl be before she has a baby ? (*Boy, 13+*)

How old must the male be to fertilise an egg in the body of a female ? (*Girl, 13+*)

[*N.B.*—The semen may not contain sperm early in adolescence.]

The second class relates to maximum age, the queries being often actuated by a half-knowledge of the menopause and a curiosity as to whether there is anything corresponding in males. Such questions are :

Can a woman over 40 have a baby ? (*Girl, 13+*)

Why don't old women have babies ? (*Boy, 13+*)

Does a man get too old for babies ? (*Boy, 13+*)

The third class relates to optimum age, and a typical question is :

What is the best age for a woman to have a baby ? (*Girl, 14+*)

In the main the replies will be factual, but there are two other considerations. When explaining that a person may become a parent as soon as their ovaries or testes produce sex cells (*i.e.* usually in the early teens), it is important to point out that the body as a whole is not fully developed until several years later, and that in any event it is undesirable



## In Search of Knowledge

for people to have children until they are fully adult, since they would otherwise have had neither time to develop properly in knowledge, in emotional outlook and in social understanding, nor opportunity to benefit from the many fairly care-free activities usual to adolescence and early adult life. The second consideration is that many girls imagine that the menopause is 'the end of things' so far as sex life is concerned, and it is well to emphasise (if the class is sufficiently mature to appreciate the value of sex in human life, apart from its rôle in reproduction) that this is not the case.

### PATHOLOGICAL INTERESTS

It is obvious from their questions that many children, probably as a result of overhearing conversations between adults, are very worried about the possibility of hurt and injury, especially during intercourse, pregnancy and birth. These fears are, as might be expected, rather more widespread among girls than among boys, but are by no means confined to the one sex. The following questions are fairly typical :

*Girls (11-13 years) :*

Does it hurt when two people have union ?

Does it hurt the woman when the penis is in the vagina ?

[N.B.—Many children appear to regard sex relations as something forced on the woman by the man, rather than as a joyful mutual surrender.]

Is the monthly period very painful ?

Does it hurt when the baby comes out ?

Does it hurt the baby when the womb squeezes it out ?

*Boys (13+ years) :*

Does it hurt to have a baby ?

Does sexual intercourse hurt a woman ?

Why do mothers die when they have babies ?

Can you get a rupture through intercourse ?

What happens if your testes get damaged ?



## Sex Education

*Girls (13-15 years) :*

Why are mothers sick when they are going to have a baby ?  
Does a mother have pains during the nine months ?  
What are labour pains ?

In answering questions of this nature, the most important consideration is the relief of fear and worry. The child needs to be reassured and its mind set at rest, particularly in the case of a girl. At the same time, it would be dishonest to pretend that bearing a child is quite free from pain, or even that it is without potential dangers. It is, however, possible to give replies that are both truthful and reassuring. For example, the following would be suitable answers to the first question in each of the above three groups :

(i) Does it hurt when two people have union ?

Good gracious, no ! Whatever made you think that ? When people are grown up and in love with each other, they have intercourse because it makes them very happy, apart from their wanting to make a baby. It certainly doesn't hurt them.

(ii) Does it hurt to have a baby ?

Yes. It usually does hurt, rather. But of course, the doctor looks after the mother very carefully, and if it begins to hurt too much, he gives her something to stop the pain — just as a dentist gives you gas or an injection when you have a tooth out. It's bound to hurt a bit, because the openings of the womb and the vagina have to stretch so much for the baby to pass out. But when the mother sees the lovely little baby afterwards, she usually thinks it was well worth it !

(iii) Why are mothers sick when they are going to have a baby ?

Well, you know, they are not *always* sick, by any means. If a mother is healthy, and doesn't let herself get worried, she often feels fitter when she's pregnant than she's ever felt in her life. Sometimes the growing baby presses against her inside and makes her feel rather sick, but it's nothing much to worry about, and it usually passes off fairly soon.

Obviously the precise phrasing would differ in every different case, but this is the *type* of answer that is needed.

Apart from questions which betray actual fear or worry



## In Search of Knowledge

about the possibility of hurt and injury, others often arise which have no apparent emotional content, but are nevertheless concerned with things 'going wrong'. Such are :

*Girls (11-13 years) :*

What happens if a baby is born too soon ?

What happens if the child's head is too big to pass out of the vagina ?

What is a miscarriage ?

Why are babies born 'simple' ?

[ditto : Deaf, dumb, etc.]

Can the baby be dead in the mother's body ?

If a woman is ruptured, can she have a baby ?

What is wrong if one breast is bigger than another ?

*Boys (13+ years) :*

Why are some babies born dead ?

[ditto : Blind, deformed, with webbed feet, etc.]

What is a stillbirth ?

*Girls (13+ years) :*

Why do some women have to have a Caesarean operation when the baby is born ?

This type of question comes perhaps rather more commonly from girls than from boys, but in either case the answer can be given fairly simply (although it may be necessary either to over-simplify pathological detail or to admit ignorance). It is, however, very important to ensure that the question is purely one of intellectual interest and not one which cloaks deep-seated apprehension, since in the latter case a very different type of reply may be advisable.

## THE VENEREAL DISEASES

A few years ago it was comparatively rarely that school children raised questions about the venereal diseases, but to-day the position is very different. Propaganda in the press, on the hoarding, over the radio and in the cinema



## Sex Education

has brought the subject very much to the fore, and willy-nilly the teacher cannot avoid it.

Often the queries relate simply to the causes, methods of spread, nature and cure of the diseases, as in the following examples :

What is pox ? (*Boy, 13+*)

How is V.D. caused ? (*Girl, 11+*)

Can you get venereal disease in other places than the sex organs ? (*Boy, 13+*)

How did these diseases start in the beginning ? (*Girl, 13+*)

Can you tell if a girl has V.D. ? (*Boy, 13+*)

It is, however, surprising how often the youngsters show an interest in the family, moral and social implications of venereal infection. This is demonstrated in such questions as :

Can a child be born whose parents have venereal disease ? (*Girl, 13+*)

[i.e. Does venereal disease produce sterility ?]

Does it affect the child ? (*Girl, 11+*)

Should people be allowed to marry if they have it ? (*Boy, 14+*)

Why is there more V.D. in war-time ? (*Boy, 13+*)

Questions, once asked, must of course be answered. But the wise teacher will arrange that the venereal diseases are dealt with mainly in connection with other communicable diseases, rather than with sex and reproduction. And in any event, it is often desirable to pass on rather quickly from questions in this category in order to avoid the arousing of excessive and morbid curiosity.

## EMOTIONAL UNDERSTANDING

It is clear from their whole attitude that most children of under about twelve years (or even older) think of sex as a purely reproductive matter, and have no conception of its amatory aspect. This attitude was summed up in the ques-



## In Search of Knowledge

tion of the eleven-year-old, who was aware that sometimes children are undesired, and asked in all simplicity :

If people don't want a baby, why do they do it ?

The idea of a couple having sexual relations except with the fixed intention of producing a child, clearly seemed quite as foolish to him as that of striking a match with no wish to produce a light. A similar failure to realise that people normally have intercourse because they are in love, quite apart from any wish for a child, is evinced by questions such as :

Does the unmarried woman know when the man is doing it to her ? If so, why does she let him ? (*Girl, 14*)

Can sex union ever take place and no child be born ? (*Girl, 13 +*)

On the other hand, questions occasionally crop up which indicate some awareness of the pleasure aspect of sex. Such questions are :

Why do people want to mate if they do not want a baby ? (*Girl, 13 +*)

Does constant sexual intercourse bring happiness ? (*Girl, 13 +*)

[N.B.—'Constant' = 'frequent'.]

Why do lovers gain so much satisfaction ? (*Girl, 15 +*)

There is no doubt that this is a much more difficult matter for classroom discussion than is the mechanism of reproduction. Some pupils will be emotionally so immature as to be quite incapable of appreciating the situation ; others might be precociously stimulated by any detailed treatment of the topic. The general line of any explanation might be :

You know that a man and woman mate when they wish to produce a baby, but there is another reason as well. People who are in love with each other like to spend their time in each other's company, and they like to be as close together as possible. They like to kiss and to put their arms round each other — you must have noticed that for yourselves. But the very closest contact of



## Sex Education

all between a man and woman is for their bodies actually to fit together. So people who are very much in love have sexual intercourse because it makes them very happy, as well as because they want children. That probably sounds very strange to you, because you are too young to feel like that. But you will understand better when you're older.

For some children this will be sufficient, or even more than sufficient, while for others it may be wise to go further in explanation. But just how far to go is a matter for decision in each case by one who knows the children well.

### SOCIAL AND MORAL ASPECTS

Closely connected with the degree of emotional development of the child is the extent of its appreciation of the social and moral implications of sex. To youngsters who regards sex solely as a means to reproduction and who therefore feel that it is obviously absurd for an unmarried person to have sexual relations, problems of sex behaviour have little reality. Occasionally, it is true, they betray by their questions an appreciation of the existence of social condemnation of illegitimacy ; *e.g.* :

Why have you to be married before you are allowed to have a baby ? (*Girl*, 11 +)

Why is it illegal [*sic* !] to have a baby before you are married ? (*Girl*, 12 +)

but generally such questions scarcely arise with the pre-adolescent.

Within the three or four succeeding years, however, the endocrine changes of adolescence begin to produce deeper sexual feelings ; an understanding of the love aspect of sex begins to dawn, and with it an interest in the morals and social conventions of sexual behaviour. This interest is particularly marked in girls, who are at this period considerably more mature than boys of a similar age. Typical questions are :



## In Search of Knowledge

### *Girls (13-15 years) :*

What is meant by illegitimate children ?

Do a lot of girls have to have ' forced ' marriages ?

Is there any harm in kissing a boy ?

Why is it wrong for these experiences to take place before marriage ?

If a woman has a baby before marriage, is it a thing to be ashamed of ?

### *Boys (13+ years) :*

Is it wrong for a man to go with a woman when they're not married ?

Is it alright to go with girls ?

### *Girls (15+ years) :*

What can be done to help people who got married thinking they were in love, and found out afterwards they were mistaken ?

What do you think about a young woman marrying an older man ?

In answering questions of this nature, the teacher is faced with a considerable difficulty. It is no longer a matter of giving scientific information about which there can be no argument except between specialists : it is a matter of morals about which there is an extremely wide range of opinion. It is necessary on one hand to encourage the children to think things out for themselves, and on the other to avoid giving undue offence to parents who hold very firmly to orthodox views. On one hand it is necessary to explain the social disadvantages of the unmarried mother and the illegitimate child, and on the other to encourage charity towards them. And it is necessary to make clear the reasons for social control of sexual expression without implying that the sex act is in itself in any way reprehensible. But the general experience is that most pupils are very ready to listen to advice on these matters, and the task is not quite so difficult as one might at first imagine.

It has been mentioned earlier that children are very likely to ask questions of a sexual content during religious study ;



## Sex Education

but like good teachers, they do not regard themselves as committed to water-tight curriculum divisions, and often raise queries of this nature during biology lessons. The sort of question that may be expected is indicated by these specimens :

Why do boys have to have an operation after they are born ?  
(*Girl*, 15 + )

[i.e. Circumcision.]

Why is a woman 'unclean' after she has had a baby ? (*Girl*, 14 + )

What is a virgin ? (*Boy*, 13 + )

What is the virgin birth ? (*Boy*, 13 + )

What is a concubine ? (*Girl*, 11 + )

What is a harlot ? (*Girl*, 13 + )

What is adultery ? (*Girl*, 9 + )

Can a man have two wives ? If not, how did Jacob ? (*Girl*, 10 + )

There is little difficulty in giving a factual answer to such queries, but other considerations are involved too. It may be necessary to explain how customs have changed, so that to-day most people would strongly disapprove of a man's having a plurality of concubines and wives. It may be well to show how a custom such as circumcision has come to have ceremonial as well as hygienic significance ; and how the general attitude to sex and birth has altered so that the conception of 'uncleanness', despite its survival in church services, is no longer widely held. And — perhaps the most ticklish point of all — it is necessary to state the facts about the limited known occurrence of parthenogenesis without offending sincerely held religious beliefs. It is necessary to give the truthful biological answer, while pointing out that there may be social, ethical and theological considerations in addition.

A suitable answer to the first of the above questions would be :

A simple little operation called 'circumcision' is often carried



## In Search of Knowledge

out on boys, usually while they are babies. You know that the tip of the penis is covered by a loose fold of skin called the ' foreskin '. Well, circumcision means cutting round the foreskin and removing it. It is often done, particularly in hot and insanitary countries, so that there will be no crevice in which dirt or secretions from the skin can gather. And since many religions grew up in the East, it has become a religious as well as a hygienic practice. In a cool land where there is every opportunity for regular washing, it is not usually necessary, although it is sometimes valuable if the foreskin happens to be rather tight.

Here, also, is a particularly difficult question following on an explanation of the meaning of the phrase ' virgin birth ', with a suggested answer :

But how could there be a virgin birth ? You said that an egg has to be fertilised by a sperm. Isn't it true about Jesus and the Virgin Mary ? (*Boy, 15 +*)

Well, that's rather difficult to answer. It's a matter of religious belief as well as biology. Do you remember, I told you some time ago about how sea-urchin's eggs and frog spawn could be made to develop without being fertilised ? That's a case of virgin birth in sea-urchin and frog. And as a matter of fact, it has even been possible to get a rabbit's ovum to develop without its being fertilised — that's virgin birth in the rabbit. But no scientist has ever met a case of virgin birth in humans. That's what I can tell you as a biologist. As far as Jesus and the Virgin Mary are concerned — well, that's a matter for you to ask your Divinity teacher or a clergyman about as well, and he'll be able to tell you something from the point of view of religion.

The teacher who makes it clear that all comments are welcome (and one who does not can hardly hope for success) must be prepared for criticism by the pupils of the way in which knowledge has been kept from them, and of the common secretive attitude to sex. This may show itself in the form of questions, as :

Why could we not know of these things before we were fourteen ? (*Girl, 14 +*)



## Sex Education

Why is it that girls regard sex matters as something to be talked about in odd corners? (*Girl, 15+*)

Do you think that girls who are told the facts of life when they are young, tend to be more sensible about them than those who are only told late? (*Girl, 16+*)

In answering such questions it should certainly be made clear that 'honesty is the best policy', but discretion is needed. The probability is that many of the pupils' parents will have failed in their duty, and one must avoid if possible any statement which will undermine their children's respect. For example, the first of the questions above might be answered in this way:

Well, there's no good reason. I think that children should learn the truth about sex as soon as they start asking questions about it. But people didn't always think like that, and many of your parents were brought up quite differently, so that some of them probably didn't like to answer all your questions. But you've had a chance to learn about sex in a proper way and I hope that when you are married and have children of your own, you will tell them the truth.

If, despite the teacher's care, a child still feels that its parents have in some way failed it, that can scarcely be astonishing, for in fact they have. One can only hope that the child, when a parent, will do better.

### FAMILY PLANNING

One difficulty that faces the teacher who deals honestly with questions about sex is that, owing to widespread discussions and trade publicity, certain queries are likely to be raised in connection with contraception. The attitude of different teachers in this matter will inevitably vary, and there is the further difficulty of uncertainty as to the views of the pupils' parents. Where, however, the question simply requires a factual answer, there seems no valid reason why it should be withheld. Such questions are:



## In Search of Knowledge

Can you control sperms from getting to the egg cell? (*Girl, 13+*)

What is birth control? (*Boy, 13+*)

Can a woman stop herself from getting pregnant? (*Boy, 13+*)

Questions of this nature can all be simply answered in some such terms as :

You know that for a baby to be produced a sperm cell must join with an egg cell. Sometimes people do not wish to have a baby, and so they use various methods to prevent the sperm and the egg from joining. That is what is called 'birth control'. When you are older, and thinking of getting married yourselves, you'll be able to get more details from your doctor.

Many questions arise from the children having seen announcements of particular types or brands of contraceptives, or having overheard reference to them. For example :

What is 'Durex'? (*Boy, 13+*)

What is a sheath? (*Girl, 13+*)

[*N.B.—Or 'French letter'.*]

What are 'Rendells'? (*Boy, 13+*)

and in these cases the best reply is probably :

I've told you what birth control is. That's the name of one method used, but you don't really need to bother about the details until you're a good deal older.

In this way it is possible to satisfy immediate curiosity without encouraging excessive interest and without (a very important matter for the teacher) laying oneself open to the charge of indulging in contraceptive propaganda.

Many children have also some knowledge of abortion, as is shown by these questions :

After a girl who is single has had union, can she get rid of the baby before it is born? (*Girl, 13+*)

Can a woman stop a baby after it has started? (*Boy, 13+*)

Is abortion a crime? (*Girl, 14+*)



## Sex Education

If asked, such queries must be answered honestly, but most teachers will wish to point out at the same time the very serious objections (on medical, social and — for many people — religious grounds) to the practice.

The other side of the question is also known to many children, and questions on sterility are quite likely to arise, for example :

Why can't some people have babies ? (*Girl, 13+*)

How is it some people are married for years and can't have a baby ? (*Boy, 13+*)

Why do some people have to adopt children instead of having them ? (*Boy, 13+*)

### IMPORTANCE OF SENSITIVITY

A perusal of the questions listed above, each one actually asked by a pupil in the classroom, makes it clear that there is some weight in the contention that class instruction brings its difficulties, and in particular the difficulty that children vary enormously in their knowledge of and attitude towards sex. But if, as the author believes, these difficulties are enormously outweighed by the advantages of dealing with sex as a normal part of the school teaching, they cannot be avoided but must be faced. At the risk of repetition, therefore, emphasis must be laid on the importance of a fine sensitivity in the teacher. Knowledge of the characteristics of the individual pupils, of their homes, of their religious beliefs ; quickness in observing the slightest signs of embarrassment, of fear, of morbid curiosity ; skill in summing up all these and other factors in the second or so available before reply — these are of supreme importance.

### QUESTIONS IN THE CLUB

Increasingly youth leaders are undertaking formal sex instruction in their clubs and organisations, in addition to the occasional personal chats which the best of them have



## In Search of Knowledge

always found an opportunity to have with individuals whom they felt would benefit from them. Like their younger brothers and sisters at school, the club members pour out question after question, and the leader will find it helpful to study typical queries and think out their answers in advance.

No rigid boundary can be drawn between the questions likely to be asked at school and those to be expected in the club. In the first place, the older pupils at some schools cover much the same age-range as members of youth organisations. Secondly, many members of youth organisations, not having had the advantage of honest sex education in the home and the school, put queries which should have been answered years earlier. Teachers must therefore be prepared to meet many of the questions in this section and youth leaders many of those in the preceding one.

### EMOTIONAL MATURING

Many of the questions that are asked by members of youth clubs show an increased awareness of the emotional aspects of sex as compared with the younger child; and sometimes seem to betray some personal experience, if not of actual intercourse, at any rate of preliminary love-making. Such questions, as would be expected in view of their earlier sexual development, tend to be rather commoner from the young women than from the young men. Typical questions are :

#### *Young Women :*

Is the sensation experienced by the woman during intercourse (which is similar to the sensation experienced by the man when the sperms are released) caused by the release of the ova? If not, what is the explanation?

Why doesn't the woman always experience satisfaction from the sex act?

Is it possible for fertilisation to take place if the woman does not reach a climax?



## Sex Education

Should a woman give way to a man even when not feeling sexual herself ?

How would one deal with a boy who wanted sexual intercourse ?

What works the boy up so that the penis goes stiff, and has he any control over himself when this happens ?

What is it in what a young man does which makes one lose one's head ?

### *Young Men :*

Why, in sexual relations, does a woman often not reach satisfaction, which causes trouble between the partners ?

What is the normal age for a serious emotion to develop over a girl ?

Does the woman experience the same feelings as the man ?

Answers to questions of this nature need very careful phrasing and must be delicately adjusted to the particular audience. In general, it is better to risk an answer unsatisfying to some of its members than one over-stimulating to others.

## MENSTRUATION

Young women raise many of the same queries about menstruation as do their schoolgirl sisters — problems of irregularity and pain ; old wives' tales about washing, brushing hair and taking exercise ; the occurrence of anything similar among men, and so on. Naturally, however, in view of their greater age and experience, there are some matters to which they pay greater attention.

One of these is that of leucorrhoea, which seems to be the cause of a great deal of misunderstanding and worry. Typical questions are :

What is ' the whites ' ?

Is it natural to have a white discharge between periods ?

What is leucorrhoea ? How is it caused ?

[N.B.—Only a simple answer is needed.]

Another matter that is constantly raised is one of menstrual



## In Search of Knowledge

hygiene — namely, the desirability or otherwise of using tampons instead of external towels. For example :

Is it wise for girls of our age to use ' Tampax ' ?

Is it sensible to wear internal sanitary protection ?

What are the objections to the use of internal sanitary towels by unmarried girls ?

Why can't young girls wear ' Tampax ' ?

It is perhaps worth mentioning that, although medical opinion is divided on the point, the general tendency is to disapprove of the use of tampons by immature girls. Those who may be called on for advice in this matter should familiarise themselves with the relevant arguments.

### THE HYMEN AND FORESKIN

These latter queries, of course, cannot adequately be answered without an explanation of the existence and position of the hymen, and of its rupture during intercourse. Perhaps, therefore, this is the best place to list a few questions which have been raised on this point :

*Young Women :*

When sexual intercourse takes place, is there a skin to be broken in the vagina ?

Is the hymen at the top of the vagina ?

Is the hymen of a girl sometimes broken through playing vigorous games ?

Does it feel very painful when you are married and the skin is broken ?

*Young Men :*

How can they tell in police courts that a girl has had intercourse ?

What does it mean for a girl to ' lose her virginity ' ?

How can you tell if the woman you marry is a virgin ?

In answering questions of this type it is well to point out, perhaps especially if the questioner is male, that to regard

An useful info for mature chapter 2



## Sex Education .

a ruptured hymen as a sign of 'loss of virginity' is (apart altogether from its unreliability even from the strictly anatomical point of view) making of moral judgment a somewhat mechanical process ; and that immensely more important than this particular bodily detail is the question of the woman's general standard of behaviour. The very phrase 'loss of virginity', indeed, seems to imply something essentially superior about the state of virginity and hence something essentially degrading about sexual intercourse. It is perhaps worth commenting, too, that the absence of any similar criterion in the man is no sort of justification for a double standard of morality.

Questions arise also about circumcision in males. There is an extraordinarily widespread vagueness about the nature of the operation, and it is therefore worth while for the lecturer to be quite precise in description. Apart, however, from enquiries as to the nature of the operation, there may be others about its medical, sensual and ceremonial significance. The following questions are typical :

What is circumcision ? (*Young man*)

Is there any good in circumcision ? (*Young man*)

If a man has had an operation on the penis, does it affect sexual relations ? (*Young woman*)

Why are Jews circumcised ? (*Young man*)

### [MASTURBATION]

In talking to audiences of young men, the lecturer will always have done his best to dispel the many myths about masturbation, but despite this queries are still asked. Examples are :

What is the truth about masturbation ?

Does masturbation lead to tuberculosis and insanity ?

[*ditto* : Innumerable other ills.]

Is it healthy to masturbate, and if so, how often ?

How can you stop the habit ?

Does it ever happen in girls ?



## In Search of Knowledge

Only rarely are questions about masturbation asked by young women, and those that are put sometimes arise from observation of infants. The only queries from them on this matter, out of a large collection, are of the following types :

- Is there any harm in rubbing yourself ?
- Why do babies play with their sex organs ?
- What should you do if a baby handles its penis ?

Answers on this topic need careful phrasing, so that while emphasising the essential harmlessness of the habit, one does not imply that it is a desirable one.

## PREGNANCY AND BIRTH

Most young women have heard a good deal about the process of birth, and many have had opportunity for fairly close contact with it, because of the birth of younger siblings or other babies in the home. It is therefore not surprising that many of their questions relate to pregnancy, birth and the care of the young baby. For example :

What is the cause of labour pains, and why are some more severe than others ?

Why will a shock or fall bring on a baby before its time ?

Why is a child sometimes born after only seven months ?

What is the cause when a baby is over nine months old in the mother's womb ?

What is the ' breaking of the water ' ?

What does the afterbirth consist of ?

Is it possible for a mother-to-be to give birth to a child without the aid of a midwife ?

Why are some children taken away from the side of the mother ?  
[i.e. What are the indications for Caesarean birth ?]

When you have a Caesarean birth, can you have other babies ?

What happens to the cord when the baby is born ? Is it put back into the mother ?

What is childbed fever ?

Does a child start breathing immediately on birth, or what does the doctor have to do to start it ?



## Sex Education

Is it true that if a woman is carrying her child, if she is frightened by an animal or creature, it comes out in the baby? [*i.e.* a birth mark is produced in the form of the animal — a common misapprehension.]

Why does the baby sometimes come out of the woman's womb dead?

How do your breasts form milk for the baby?

Is it quite normal for the baby to have a little discharge from the navel?

Less frequently questions in this category come from young men, as :

What causes a miscarriage?

If a woman has her period during pregnancy, is the child affected in any way?

Are there two afterbirths after twins?

[*N.B.*—This depends upon the particular type of twinning.]

What causes a child to be born dead?

Particularly where young women are concerned, replies to questions of this nature should seek to reassure at least as much as to inform.

### HEREDITY AND MULTIPLE BIRTHS

Audiences of all ages will seek information about heredity, sex determination and multiple birth, and older adolescents and young adults are no exception. Probably few lecturers will be able to avoid, on occasion, a confession of complete ignorance. The following questions are fairly typical of those asked :

*Young Women :*

What is the cause of birth-marks?

If a man or woman suffers from epilepsy, will it be passed on to the children?

[*ditto* : Innumerable other ills.]

A seemingly healthy man and wife have two girls, both deaf and dumb from birth. Can you explain this?



## In Search of Knowledge

Do large families run in families ?

[i.e. Is fecundity inherited ?]

It is often heard of families all being mean or never telling the truth. Can you inherit this sort of thing ?

If a brother and sister had a child together, would it be healthy ?

Is it possible for the sex of a child to be determined by chemical means ?

[N.B.—In some questions 'determine' = 'fix according to choice'; in other questions 'determine' = 'discover'.]

Can you tell what sex a child is before it is born ?

How are twins accounted for ?

Why is the reason that some twins are born together, and some days apart ?

My mother was unfortunate enough to catch cholera in an epidemic many years ago. As she was four months pregnant and had a miscarriage, she was seriously ill. The midwife who attended her discovered that there were two babies — one four months and the other not more than two. She was wildly excited and told my mother that she was "one case in a million". Could you explain how this happened ?

How is it that two bodies are joined together, as in Siamese twins ?

### *Young Men :*

If a parent was suffering from some illness when conception took place, would there be any likelihood of this development in the child ? For example, a soldier returning from the East suffering from dysentery ?

You say that tremendous numbers of sperms are produced, and apparently a great many enter the female during sexual intercourse. Therefore, are the tendencies or chromosomes of each sperm exactly alike, so that the offspring produced from the union of one egg cell and the sperms would be exactly the same if another sperm had united with the female cell ?

Can you decide whether you will have a boy or a girl ?

Are twins or more at birth the result of two or more intercourses ?

What is the reason for quintuplets ?

After a baby is born, can another be born a few months later ?



# Sex Education

## HYGIENE OF MARRIAGE

As they approach the age when marriage begins to appear as a possibility in the not too distant future, young people begin to put queries relating definitely to marital hygiene. For example :

*Young Men :*

Can a woman conceive the first time intimacy takes place ?

Why is it conception takes place in the first week of marriage in some cases, and in others it takes years ?

Is intercourse during pregnancy advisable ?

How often is it wise to have the sex act ?

Does over-indulgence in sexual intercourse affect the health ?

What are the positions for the sex act ?

Why does sexual intercourse have to take place at night ? (*sic* !)

*Young Women :*

How long does intercourse usually take ?

Is it possible to have children from one occasion ?

[*i.e.* Single act of intercourse.]

How is it that although people have many sexual intercourses, only one out of many ever makes a woman pregnant ?

How long is it before you can tell you're pregnant ?

Can a husband tell his wife is going to have a baby before she tells him ?

During pregnancy how many monthly periods are missed and when do they start again ?

Is it possible to have intercourse while a baby is on the way ?

Does intercourse injure the unborn child ?

Should you have intercourse during periods ?

Should expectant mothers give up smoking ?

[*ditto* : Drinking.]

How long should two married people wait before they have intercourse after the birth of a child ?

What is the ' change of life ' ?

Does a male cease to be reproductive later in life like the female has the menopause ?

Some of the above questions are easy enough to answer, the replies being merely matters of fact. Others present



## In Search of Knowledge

greater difficulty, since the answer would vary so greatly in the case of each individual couple. It is well, therefore, to emphasise the wisdom of consulting the family medical attendant or a special clinic when the problems arise concretely, as they will do so for most of the young people in a few years' time.

### FAMILY PLANNING

As would be expected, youth audiences raise many more questions about family planning than do school children. Sometimes only a general explanation of contraception is desired, sometimes details of a particular trade product, sometimes an estimate of the relative efficiency of different techniques. Questions on the so-called 'safe period' are also fairly frequent, and so are requests for guidance on the ethics of contraception. Abortion, too, is the subject of many queries, while the problems of sterility in a couple who desire children is also raised. Typical questions are :

#### *Young Women :*

Would you please explain birth control ?

Can you tell me what 'Rendells' are made of, and if they are the cause of ill-health as some people seem to think ?

What is the safest way to perform birth control ?

Is total abstinence the only way to avoid babies ?

[N.B.—This is an 'angling' question.]

When two people have intercourse, does it mean that the woman will have a baby, or are there safe times between the monthly periods ?

Should you use birth control ?

Some people when pregnant try to get rid of the baby — what exactly happens ?

If someone is expecting a baby and tries to stop it, does it harm the baby ?

How is it that a woman who badly wants a baby can't have one ?

#### *Young Men :*

What is birth control, and how reliable is it ?



## Sex Education

Is it true that manufacturers have to make one dud in each ten so that people will be afraid to use them ?

[*N.B.*—A common misapprehension.]

Is there a period during the menstrual cycle that conception does not occur ?

Are contraceptives contrary to human nature ?

Can the development of a baby in the early stages be stopped in any way ?

What is the cause of sterility ?

Why is it impossible for some seemingly normal people to have children ?

Most of these questions are not essentially difficult to answer, but in view of the very wide range of opinion on the ethics of family limitation, discretion is needed in reply.

### SOCIAL AND MORAL ASPECTS

It is encouraging to note that a fair proportion of our young people — despite the criticism to which their elders have so often subjected them — are seriously concerned with the welfare of society in sexual matters and really wish for guidance in their own sex behaviour. This is demonstrated by such questions as :

*Young Men :*

What are the moral standards on the Continent ? Are they as good as in England ?

In our modern society, with its present laws of decency and moral standards, the problems of sex and youth has become very pressing. How would you propose to solve the difficulty ?

Why do we not stamp out ' red lamp ' areas ?

Is there any harm in listening to smutty stories ?

Is there any harm in having a bit of fun with a girl if you don't go too far ?

Why are you only supposed to have sex experience when you are married ?

*Young Women :*

Is it advisable for English girls to marry people of all nationalities ?



## In Search of Knowledge

Should there be blood tests before marriage ?

Is it wise for a cripple to have a baby ?

Is it wise for apparently healthy cousins to marry ?

Why is prostitution tolerated in civilised countries ?

What are the advantages and disadvantages eugenics would give in the production of an A1 race ?

Are inhibitions of sex impulses harmful ? What are the ideal steps for the sublimation of these impulses ?

The answers to many of these questions are inevitably matters of opinion, and the lecturer, while naturally stating his own personal viewpoint, needs to avoid undue dogmatism. With skilful handling, the audience can be persuaded to express their own opinions and very fruitful discussions can be brought about.

## THE VENEREAL DISEASES

For many years the subject of venereal diseases has been hidden away and not discussed in polite society, but this is no longer the case. The recent widespread publicity campaigns have brought the matter out into the open, and large numbers of questions are almost invariably asked about it at meetings of young people. It is therefore necessary for those who may be contemplating speaking at such meetings, to familiarise themselves with the main facts, taking particular care that their information is up to date. Here are some typical questions :

*Young Women :*

Would you mind giving particulars of preventative treatment of venereal disease ?

[i.e. Prophylactic measures.]

How long do venereal diseases last ?

What effects have they on the person concerned and on prospective children ?

Is it possible to get V.D. from a public lavatory ?

[N.B.—Similarly from towels, crockery, etc.]

What is the modern treatment ?



## Sex Education

Is it hereditary ?

Can a man contract V.D. through having intercourse with a woman during menstruation ?

[N.B.—A common misapprehension.]

Can a doctor become infected while examining people ?

If a person has V.D. in its latest stages and is pronounced incurable, are they sterilised ?

Can a girl give it you who works next to you at work ?

*Young Men :*

What is ' soft chancre ' ?

How did venereal diseases start ?

How long does treatment last ?

Can it be contracted from kissing ?

How do you recognise the symptoms ?

What is the average life of the germs outside the body ?

What are the chances of cure ?

Are blood donors given tests for these diseases ?

Are factories responsible in any way for spreading the disease, through infected persons handling materials which have to be passed from one person to another during the manufacturing process ?

These specimen questions indicate what soon becomes apparent to the person who gives such lectures — namely, that with a few exceptions, to the general public ' V.D.' is ' venereal disease ' rather than ' venereal diseases '. Even after explicit reference has been made to the distinct causative organisms of syphilis and gonorrhoea, it is still necessary, in answer after answer, to make this point again and again. The questions also indicate that for all except the specialist, there will be many occasions when the only possible answer is an honest confession of ignorance. (Although the number of such occasions naturally diminishes as experience is gained.)

## JOURNALISTIC INSPIRATION

Newspaper articles about ' test tube babies ' and the like are responsible for many questions. Sometimes, however,



## In Search of Knowledge

the questioner fails to distinguish between three distinct phenomena — parthenogenesis, artificial insemination and ectogenesis — and it is necessary before answering to find out exactly which is intended. Typical questions, with suggested answers, are :

Can a baby be born without the egg being fertilised ? (*Young man*)

In some animals it happens in Nature as a matter of course, and in others (such as the frog and the rabbit) scientists have been able to get the eggs to develop into young without the help of sperm. But no scientist has ever got a human egg to grow like this.

Is it possible for conception to take place without sexual intercourse, as there was a recent case in the newspaper ? (*Young woman*)

Yes, it is possible, if the sperm is brought to the egg in some other way. For some years, stockbreeders have collected semen from bulls, and then transferred it to the vaginas of cows ; and perfectly normal, healthy calves have been born. The same can be done with humans if for some reason intercourse is impossible. The method has been used quite widely in the United States and the Soviet Union, and is being introduced in Britain.

There has been much talk lately about 'test tube babies'. Would it be possible to produce children by this method, by means of an apparatus like the female body, if the sperms and ovum were brought together under similar conditions as in copulation ? (*Young man*)

Well, great strides have been made in growing animal tissues in the laboratory, and I suppose that it *might* be a possibility at some time in the distant future. But it has certainly never been done so far.

Press reports are also largely responsible for many questions about sex reversal, hermaphroditism and homosexuality. For example :

How does change in sex occur ? (*Young woman*)

Why do people change their sex ? I read of a soldier doing so at the age of thirty. (*Young man*)



## Sex Education

What causes a child to be born which is of both sexes? (*Young woman*)

What does it mean when a man is summoned for being improper with another man? (*Young man*)

In answering this type of journalistically inspired query, it is well to point out first of all that newspaper reports are not scientific papers, and that they cannot therefore always be relied upon without further investigation. That general warning issued, one then can proceed to a factual answer.

### LINGUISTIC IGNORANCE

Young people to-day are so often said to be very knowledgeable and 'hard-boiled', that it comes as a surprise to many adults when they occasionally find questions indicating complete ignorance of the meaning of words with a sexual content. Examples are :

What does 'prostitute' mean?

What is a brothel?

What is the meaning of 'privates' and where are they?

and these can be answered simply enough.

One must also be prepared for an occasional bombshell in the meeting, thrown quite innocently by an enquirer who asks :

What does it mean?

the dash standing for any one of those sexual words or phrases to be seen occasionally chalked up on walls, but not generally used in polite society. In the author's experience a question of this nature has never been asked in such a manner as to indicate other than innocent intent. That, unfortunately, does not prevent the occasion's being somewhat embarrassing, to audience if not to lecturer. But it is necessary to make the best of the job, to express neither disapproval nor surprise, and to give an honest answer, which might be along the following lines :



## In Search of Knowledge

Well, that's a word that we don't usually use in public. But of course many people have to use it because they don't know any other. You must remember that everyone doesn't have the chance to learn the scientific words from their parents or teachers or by attending meetings like these. That word means the same as (copulate, penis, testes, vagina, etc.), but naturally you won't need to use it because you know the proper scientific term.

Somewhat similar in genesis is the question which, without actually using the unorthodox word or phrase, seems to be angling after it. For example, the young woman who asked :

What do people call the process by which the man inserts the sperm into the woman ?

was probably seeking confirmation of her suspicion that that was what the not-quite-nice word she had heard really *did* mean. In some circumstances it might be possible for the lecturer to clear up the matter completely by actually using the word in question, but usually considerations of tact will rule this out. Then probably the best thing to do is to answer :

Well, I have mentioned in my lecture that the proper term is ' copulation ' or ' mating ' or ' sexual intercourse '. But people do use other words, and if there's any word you've heard whose meaning you aren't quite sure of, come and have a chat with me afterwards and we'll get things straightened out.

The invitation will not always be accepted, but sometimes it will, and in personal conversation one can speak more bluntly than one may consider wise in a public utterance.

### NOT KNOWLEDGE ONLY

Despite the heading to this chapter, it should now be clear that when questions are asked about sex, it is not always merely knowledge that is sought. If it were, the educator would need no qualities other than those of the encyclopaedia.



## Sex Education

But in fact, questioners may be seeking emotional reassurance ; they may be asking to be relieved of fears and worries or extending an invitation to correct misunderstanding and faulty perspectives ; they may be asking confirmation of truths long suspected but emotionally rejected ; they may be seeking guidance on matters of behaviour.

This is what makes the questions both more difficult to answer and more fruitful in the answering. Always one must go deeper than the surface query and try to estimate the emotional state of the enquirer. " Shall I give the bald facts, or shall I tone them down a little ? " " Shall I make my main object that of reassurance and come back to the details of the factual answer a little later ? " " Is the state of mind of the questioner such that it will be wise to give a healthy shock by exceptional boldness in reply, or such that I had better give the bare minimum of information ? " " To what extent is it worth while to deal with the moral and social implications of this query ? " These and other questions must be constantly in mind, and on the answers to them the answers to the enquirers must depend.

Thus in ten different sets of circumstances the same query may need answering in ten different ways. All replies must have in common the absence of any falsehood, but they will differ in the extent of their content of truth. One can to a considerable extent learn by experience. But experience is a costly school, and the expense may be considerably reduced by preliminary thought and study.



## Chapter Eight

# Educating the Educators

The very persons to whom to-day we have to look to effect the sexual enlightenment of children, are themselves to a great extent also in need of enlightenment.

ALBERT MOLL

### URGENCY OF NEED

Now that the main opposition to sex education has been overcome and there is fairly general agreement about its desirability, it seems likely to spread very rapidly. This spread is long overdue and must be both welcomed and facilitated, but it carries a potential danger. The danger in the main is that in unskilful hands comparatively little of value may be achieved. To admit this may appear to be conceding a point to those jeremiahs who for years have moaned that "you may do more harm than good", but it is in fact no such concession. For while *they* proceed to draw the conclusion that in view of the limitations of the educators the education must be abandoned, *we* affirm that in view of the necessity of the education the limitations of the educators must be removed.

It is, therefore, urgently necessary that there should be put in hand a far-reaching programme directed to this end. Long-term plans must include drastic alteration in school, university and training college curricula, but we cannot wait for that. Side by side with these changes must go the organisation of immediate help to present parents, doctors, teachers, youth leaders and religious and social workers. Side by side — not trailing behind. The quantitative increase in sex education which is already upon us, must be accompanied by a qualitative improvement. This matter



## Sex Education

of the education of our educators is of fundamental importance and must be given very high priority.

### SELF-PREPARATION

Adults can in part prepare themselves to undertake sex education by a certain amount of intelligent introspection. Was one an only child or a member of a large family? Had one a happy childhood or unhappy? A narrow-minded or a tolerant upbringing? Was one fobbed off with stories of the 'gooseberry bush' variety? Is one married or single? A parent or not? Whatever the answers may be, these factors will have exerted some influence on our attitude to sex, and an honest recognition of the position will go far to enable us to counter our shortcomings and develop our advantages.

It is valuable, too, to experience at first hand some of the determinants of youthful attitudes and opinions. What magazines do our charges read? What films do they see? *We* must read and see them too, even the least desirable of them, if we are to have any real knowledge of the personalities which we are trying to influence. The educator who contemptuously passes over the 'personal problems' columns of the weekly journals and daily papers, and switches off the radio when a speaker is about to answer such queries, cuts himself off from a valuable source of information about the matters that exercise the minds of those ordinary folk he hopes to help. Without ourselves accepting the common standards, we must be thoroughly familiar with them.

### NECESSARY QUALIFICATIONS

He who would undertake sex education with success needs many qualities which may bear little or no relation to academic attainment. The first essential is personal sex adjustment and an absence equally of any prudish disinclination to discuss sex and any prurient tendency to discuss it



## Educating the Educators

to excess. A happily married person is more likely than an unmarried person to have achieved this harmony, and other things being equal, is likely to meet with greater success. But so often other things are not equal — and some unmarried people, both men and women, are far better suited to this work than many who have been married for years. The mere fact of being married is no guarantee of a healthy attitude to sex, any more than the mere fact of being a parent is a guarantee of a perfect understanding of children. Obviously, so far as specific preparation for marriage is concerned, the instructor should have marriage experience ; but in most fields of sex education the virgin need labour under no very great disadvantage. Indeed, in the case of talks to groups of adolescents, who are themselves in general still single, unmarried lecturers may even be able to enter the more closely into the thoughts and feelings of their audiences. It is unfortunate for many reasons that most women teachers are unmarried, but anyone familiar with the excellent sex education carried out by some of them, will agree that the plea that all who work in this field must be married is a specious one.

In all education the teacher needs a sympathetic understanding of the pupils, but this applies with special force in sex education. He who has forgotten his own schooldays, she who cannot enter into the feelings of the young girl, have no place in this work. Hypocrisy and narrow-mindedness are fatal. Honesty and tolerance are essential. Imagination is needed too — the ability to sympathise with the feelings of a child and to understand the perplexity of the adolescent, while yet retaining the mature judgment and emotional stability of the adult.

Especially valuable is a fine sensitivity, an ability to detect the slightest trace of uneasiness and to set the worried mind quickly at rest. Often a slight movement of a boy's head in the classroom, a slightly strained look on the face of a girl in the clubroom, will indicate that someone is ill-at-



## Sex Education

ease, and that special care is needed. It may be that reluctance to ask questions, or on the other hand excessive eagerness to do so, betrays an emotional tangle in some young person's mind — a tangle that needs unravelling. It is quite impossible to lay down any rules for detecting such signs. There is no formula for sensitivity, but by its presence or absence sex education may succeed or fail.

One other quality the sex educationist must have — a sense of humour. There are those who feel that if a group of children is amused at the spectacle of millions of magnified spermatozoa wiggling across the cinema screen like so many tadpoles, there must be something 'nasty' in their minds. But surely the thing to do is not to suppress a giggle, but to convert it by one's own example into a hearty laugh. Then there are those whose sense of propriety is offended when some unfortunate questioner, by the inexpert use of language, converts a serious query into a rather humorous phrase; and feel that it would be quite inappropriate to recognise the humour. Yet there is no doubt that very often a ripple of laughter will relieve a feeling of tension and clear the atmosphere for a continuation of the instruction. And by joining in the laughter the adult demonstrates his own warm humanity. Yes, surprising as it may seem to some, sex education has a place for humour.

If it is a question of choice between, on one hand, an adult who is free from embarrassment, who understands children, is honest, sensitive, broadminded and tolerant, and yet has but the meagrest academic knowledge; and on the other hand an expert biologist, with a detailed knowledge of psychology, pathology and sociology, able to write theses on educational technique, and yet lacking in these warm human qualities, the former has the advantage every time. This is both a warning and an encouragement. It is a warning against judging people's suitability for sex education by their paper qualifications, and an encouragement to those thousands of good-hearted but modest folk in the street,



## Educating the Educators

who wish to help in sex education but have been doubtful of their ability to do so.

Havelock Ellis once wrote :

To fulfil his functions adequately, the master in the art of sexual hygiene must answer three requirements . . . he must have a sufficing knowledge of the facts of sexual psychology, sexual physiology and sexual pathology . . . he must have a wise and broad moral outlook, with a sane idealism which refrains from demanding impossibilities . . . finally, a genuine sympathy with the young, an insight into their sensitive shyness, a comprehension of their personal difficulties, and the skill to speak to them simply, frankly and humanely.

It is doubtful whether any amount of training in adult life will make a great deal of difference to some of these personal qualities, but the acquisition of the "sufficing knowledge" should not be difficult. The extent of knowledge required naturally varies from person to person. What suffices for one will be totally insufficient for another and far more than is necessary for a third. One occasionally comes across lists of the qualifications needed by the sex educationist, and very impressive they usually are. But if in fact they were all essential, we might well despair of ever tackling the job for lack of people competent to help. What the compilers of such lists fail to recognise is that it is quite utopian to expect every citizen to be at once a biologist, a physician, a psychologist, a sociologist and a pathologist — and that in drawing up these formidable schedules (admirable as they may be as an ultimate ideal) they may frighten off more readers than they inspire.

### PARENTS

The role of parents in sex education is fundamental, and it is therefore of the first importance that they should be prepared to play their proper part. How much easier and more fruitful is the work of the teacher if the pupils come



## Sex Education

from homes in which the parents have not shirked their job ! And with how much more confidence and success can the doctor undertake the marriage guidance of young people whose sex education has been, as it should be, a gradual process starting in infancy ! Well might Charles Dickens write :

We thought that, perhaps, it is right to begin with the obligations of home, sir ; and that, perhaps, while those are overlooked and neglected, no other duties can possibly be substituted for them.

There is the core of the problem — the building-up of a generation of parents willing and competent to lay the foundations on which the specialists can later build.

It is reasonable to hope that children who have had their questions answered sensibly in the home ; who have learned biology at school, including the biology of human reproduction ; who have joined with other lasses and lads in mixed swimming and games and rambles and camps ; who have during courtship had adequate preparation for marriage — that these parents of to-morrow will be able to play their part in the sex education of their own children. Such at least is the view of the thirteen-year-old London girl who wrote :

If the children know about it now, when they grow up and have children they will not be frightened to tell their children.

But that lies in the future. What of the parents of to-day ? Rosy optimism is worse than useless, and it must be recognised that many present parents are too ignorant to explain the facts of sex to their children, too indolent to remedy their ignorance, and too tangled in their emotional attitudes to be able to do much were they very encyclopaedias of sexual knowledge. But not all present parents. Many are well informed, and many others anxious to inform themselves. Many have a thoroughly healthy attitude to sex and



## Educating the Educators

many others are eager to attain it. With such there are great possibilities.

Here there is wide scope for collaboration between school and home. Where sex education is carried out in the school, whether by members of the staff or by visiting specialists, parents' meetings should be arranged, not so much to *ask* the parents if the school may undertake this instruction, as to *inform* them of what is proposed and invite their co-operation. Many parents (and — a point often forgotten in this connection — parents include fathers as well as mothers !) will welcome the opportunity of knowing about and discussing with the teacher the sex education of their children. And many, although not all will admit it, themselves learn some of the facts of sex and the necessary minimum technical vocabulary for the first time at such meetings. The teacher too will benefit. For it should never be forgotten that sex education is not a thing isolated and apart, but one particular aspect of health education and character training — and an aspect in which mutual understanding and co-operation between school and home is of particular importance. Similar considerations naturally apply to co-operation between home and youth club, and youth club and school.

In most cases it will hardly be possible to expect parents to attend definite instructional courses in sex education, for such is our social and educational system that the large majority will lack the time, the enthusiasm and the intellectual freshness to undertake comprehensive study. But a certain minority will be willing to do so, and this minority has in the past been almost completely neglected. Courses could be arranged for the parents of new entrants to the nursery or infant school, and perhaps again when their children pass on to the secondary stage. More systematic help and guidance could be given to expectant and nursing mothers at the clinics and welfare centres. The matter could be dealt with at village institutes, community centres, co-operative guilds and the like. It is certainly true that all



## Sex Education

this would take time and money — but with proper organisation we should be short of neither.

### TEACHERS

So far as teachers are concerned, it is reasonable to expect a much more thorough preparation. Most of what is needed to provide the necessary background to sex education for the non-biologist student, should indeed be part of the normal professional training course. All teachers need an understanding of the child's bodily, intellectual and emotional development,<sup>1</sup> and this can only be based on a knowledge of fundamental physiological and psychological principles. Such learning will involve a study of the endocrine glands and their secretions, and their effect on development, especially during adolescence. Here bodily function links up with emotional state, and emotional state with the intellect and the nervous system. Since we are not entirely creatures of our emotions and inborn reflexes, but have the power of learning and of exercising self-control, physiology has implications for educational psychology and ethical values and social attitudes. And if it be objected that study of this nature cuts across the traditional barriers between the individual sciences and between the sciences and the arts, then it is so much the worse for the traditional barriers.

It would also be very valuable for teachers to have an understanding of the sexual behaviour and problems characteristic of children of various ages, and to study in more detail those of the age-range which they are specially preparing to teach. Moreover, since sex education in the school will be effective in proportion as sex education in the home

<sup>1</sup> This is recognised by the McNair Report (*vide* footnote on p. 135) which states: "A necessary part of the course in the principles of education is instruction upon and observation of the physical and mental development of children."



## Educating the Educators

is not neglected, teachers need also to understand something of the problems of home life and infant training. Equipped with such understanding, they would be the more ready to appreciate the value of co-operation between the school and the home, and the more fitted to advise the parents.

All teachers need also to be equipped with certain fundamental data which will enable them to answer adequately questions which happen to arise in their school lessons. These questions they cannot answer without themselves having a clear understanding of the main facts of sex and reproduction — and astonishing as it may seem, a very large number of 'well educated' people have no such understanding — and without being familiar with the technical vocabulary necessary for them to reply in language simple but accurate, not too technical but not too earthy. This implies that *all* teachers in training — whether they are going to teach the functioning of living things or the structure of dead languages — should take a course in human and social biology.

Since it is only the exceptional person, the born teacher, who can deal with sex education without some study in its methods, teachers should not be turned loose on the schools before receiving such training. This is true of education generally, not merely of this particular aspect of it. The ways in which the various subjects of the school curriculum may be utilised as media of sex education, the value of various extra-curricular activities in the development of character, the effect of the general school routine and tone upon the fixing of sex habits and attitudes — all these should be studied. And if it be objected that there is no time to study all this, so much the worse for the miserably inadequate period of training which is still considered sufficient for our teachers.

Few countries but Britain are content that the custodians of its children shall pass straight from school to college, spend



## Sex Education

an all-too-brief and all-too-isolated couple of years there, and then be regarded as qualified to teach — or even worse, that the best of the university graduates should be able to obtain teaching posts without undergoing any training whatsoever. Not only do the curricula of our universities and training courses need a new orientation, not only do the training colleges themselves need reinvigoration by an ending of their monastic seclusion, but the period of training needs at least to be doubled. If five or six years are needed to equip a person to deal with the health of our children's bodies, two will not do for those who have the care of their minds. In our schools is built our future, and those who are its architects should no longer be satisfied with an apprenticeship of a duration which would not qualify them to mend a leaking lavatory.

For the present, unfortunately, such a thorough course of training as is here envisaged remains an ideal, and we must do what is possible under existing conditions. Many young people — barely adult themselves — are entering our schools as teachers, and they cannot in most cases be expected to have matured sufficiently, in the brief two or three years since they left school, to tackle properly the question of how to deal with the problems of sex education. Perhaps so long as this miserably inadequate period of training persists, the colleges can help most of all by clearing up their students' *own* problems concerning sex. Until all parents and all schools are doing their job properly, we shall have teachers-in-training who themselves are quite ignorant of many of the most elementary sexual facts, and who have themselves grown up with distorted sexual attitudes. If by the time they leave the training colleges their own difficulties have been smoothed out, there will be more prospect of their benefiting later by special courses in sex education.

The organisation of such courses is recognised by progressive education authorities as being of prime importance, especially since the great majority of our teachers left college



## Educating the Educators

many years ago. It would obviously be desirable for certain members of school staffs to be released for a full term or year of concentrated study, but equally obviously this will at present be possible in hardly any cases. The next best alternative is the arrangement of vacation courses of perhaps a fortnight's duration, in which a very great deal of ground could be covered. But even this will not be feasible for all teachers. Yet it must be very rarely that an authority would be unable to organise for its school staffs, during the school term, a course of perhaps six or eight lectures on the materials and methods of sex education, and experience has shown that even in this limited time it is possible to do much good. Teachers who have attended such a series of meetings are quite unanimous about their value — not only because of the information derived from the lectures, but perhaps even more from the opportunity thereby presented for the exchange of views and experiences.

### SPECIALIST TEACHERS

Specialist teachers such as biologists, having greater opportunities in sex education, will naturally need fuller preparation. In the future, when universities and training colleges have put their respective houses in order, much of this preparation will be received during training. Biological courses in the universities are at present in the main of a formalised nature, appropriate only to the training of biological research workers, and the training colleges tend to repeat the same lectures at second hand. Alumni of these institutions are likely to be fairly familiar with the genetics of *Primula* and *Drosophila*, but to know little or nothing about that of *Homo sapiens*; to have more than a nodding acquaintance with the reproductive peculiarities of the obscurer myxomycetes and the ecology of salt marshes, but except in so far as they have wisely cut certain lectures in



## Sex Education

order to do more valuable private reading, to be almost completely ignorant of the sexual life of humans and of the functioning of their society. But in both universities and training colleges a few individuals have seen the light, and with the mass support of the teachers they should be able to carry out the much-needed and long-belated curriculum reforms.

We may hope that biology teachers of the future will have taken courses of nature study which have concentrated rather less upon the details of leaf venation and rather more upon such themes as reproduction, care of offspring, family life and social co-operation, over a wide range of living organisms — not excluding humans. They may have included in their studies a consideration of the relationship (which is by no means one of identity) between sex and reproduction, of sex dimorphism, of sexual emotions, of courtship and of mating, of the origins of human society and its conventions of marriage and of the social control of sexual expression. Their courses will have covered the workings of the endocrine glands and the influence of their secretions upon bodily and emotional development, and will have recognised the interdependence of physiological and psychological factors. Thus equipped with specialist knowledge, in addition to the general training which all teachers should receive, their special part in sex education will present them with little difficulty.

In the future we may have such teachers, but there are few to-day. In the meantime, then, what can be done? A great deal. Most present teachers of biology have the background which will enable them to pick up the necessary extra factual knowledge quite quickly, and many of them have the requisite personality. What is most needed in such cases is courses of instruction by specialists, dealing in part with those physiological and psychological aspects of sex which are not normally covered in university and training college syllabuses, and in part with the technique of sex



## Educating the Educators

instruction in the school. Such courses will not make first-rate sex educationists of all who attend them — the solution of our problem is not a mere matter of conjuring. But at any rate *some* of the teachers will then be competent to deal with the subject with their pupils, and the others will at least have derived personal benefit.

Even where a school staff includes no biologist (and this is still true of too many schools) much can nevertheless be done. Obviously no short course of lectures can be an adequate substitute for a prolonged training, but a teacher who is keen to learn and willing to supplement lectures by private reading, can benefit greatly by attendance at a well-devised elementary biology course. Without years of advanced biological study, it is yet possible to give simple lessons in human physiology in the classroom, and in such lessons sex and reproduction may take their proper place.

Specialists other than the biologist have a part to play, and whatever subjects they teach, it will be profitable to study the ways in which they may be utilised as media of sex education. A few lectures may help, but what is needed even more is that the teachers concerned should gather together in small specialist study groups and thrash out the problems of their own particular subject, and later meet with the other groups to compare notes and arrange for co-ordination between them.

### HEAD TEACHERS

It is frequently suggested that sex instruction is most appropriately given by the head teacher (and the author hopes that it will not be regarded as unkind if he comments that in his experience this view is most often expressed by those who have themselves attained to this dignity). But surely this attitude derives from a feeling that sex is in some way a very special matter, apart from the rest of life, and that sex education is an isolated thing, apart from the rest of education. On set occasions (only too often in their last week at school)



## Sex Education

the pupils are gathered together, or invited separately to the head's room, to receive information on ' the facts of life ' — and out of politeness, to pretend that it is ' news ' ! But apart from the consideration that not all head teachers have the necessary knowledge or the proper personality, such an approach suffers from the serious disadvantage of undue isolation and emphasis. The mere fact that the head is the head, is liable to set up an atmosphere of uniqueness and excitement that is most prejudicial to proper sex instruction. It may be in some cases that the head of the school normally teaches biology or physical education or some other subject which may be utilised as a medium of sex education, and then of course he may play his part. But in that event he acts in the capacity of class teacher and not in that of head teacher.

This is not to say that the principals of schools have no special place in a scheme of sex education. They have, and it is a very important one. They only have the authority to call the staff together, as all staffs should be called together, to exchange views and experiences and to work out a coherent sex education scheme for the school. They only have the authority to convene meetings of the pupils' parents to explain to them what is being done in the school and to arrange for co-operation between the school and the home. It is they who can take the initiative in prodding the laggard education authorities, and they who are responsible for putting into effect the recommendations of the progressive ones. And above all, it is pre-eminently they who set the school tone. Head teachers, too, should therefore benefit by meeting together and exchanging experiences and suggestions, and drawing up plans for action.

## YOUTH LEADERS

Youth leaders, like teachers, fall into two categories in relation to sex education. All, without exception, require



## Educating the Educators

some understanding of the physiology and psychology of sex, with special reference to the characteristics of adolescence. Without this they can scarcely hope to deal intelligently and sympathetically with the occasional occurrence in their clubs of sexual misbehaviour or the more frequent cases of emotional disturbance fundamentally due to sexual causes. They need also some knowledge of the experts to whom they may refer cases of special difficulty. Nor is it difficult for them to gain this understanding and this knowledge. Even within the limitations of four or five meetings, perhaps at a week-end school, much ground can be covered ; and if those attending are directed in a little further reading, they should benefit considerably.

But some leaders will be qualified by their background, experience and personality, actually to undertake group instruction after a somewhat fuller preparation. It would be futile in most cases to imagine that they could do so without preparation. It would not be difficult to cram up sufficient information to give three or four talks — but it is the succeeding questions and discussion that are so searching.

Youth leaders aspiring to such work should in general have a background of biological knowledge or be prepared to undertake some serious biological study. They should meet to receive suggestions from experts, both along the lines suggested for all youth leaders, and concerning methods of presentation ; and they should attend, as members of the audience, lectures given by experienced speakers. They will need guidance in their reading and constructive criticism of their first instructional efforts. This may all sound rather formidable, but no leader who sees the importance of this work will deny that, if it is to be done well, adequate preparation is needed.

### WELFARE WORKERS

Many of our most valuable youth leaders — albeit not functioning under that name — are to be found in the ranks



## Sex Education

of the social and industrial welfare workers. Young people spend a few hours each week in their clubs and organisations ; they spend many hours each day at work. Herein lies the great responsibility of industrial welfare workers — and herein their great opportunity.

The general considerations of understanding the difficulties of adolescents and showing sympathy with their problems, applies just as with the parent, the teacher and the club leader. But there are some special considerations too. The improvement of conditions of work, the proper organisation of canteens and social and educational activities, the radical cleaning-up of dirty urinals and closets which simply invite obscene epigraphy, the arrangement of discussions with the adult workers to enlist their co-operation in guiding their younger colleagues — all these are matters which may exert a powerful influence for good, and are matters within the province of the industrial welfare worker. This is, however, an aspect of sex education which has been much neglected, and one upon which comparatively little advice can be given by outside 'specialists'. Those who know the industrial conditions must largely educate themselves by mutual discussion and exchange of experiences.

## CLERGYMEN

In discussing the role of clergymen, it is useful to distinguish their purely religious functions from their social and welfare work. In fact, such a distinction is rather artificial, since works cannot be completely isolated from faith. But in so far as they run youth clubs and welfare centres, the clergy need self-preparation very similar to that of other youth leaders and welfare workers. Many church members will also bring their intimate problems to the clergyman, and he should prepare himself to deal with them adequately.

Clergymen have, however, another great opportunity. Despite the drift to the registry office, large numbers of



## Educating the Educators

people still go to church to be married. And if the priest is to carry out the marriage ceremony, it is surely incumbent upon him to make sure that the couple know precisely to what they are committing themselves. Many clergymen make a practice of arranging for physiological instruction to be given to engaged couples, in addition to any spiritual guidance they wish to give ; and it is much to be hoped that this practice will spread — even to the registrars !

A small but perhaps very important matter to which the clergy might well address themselves, is the sex education of their Sunday School teachers, along the lines indicated under the heading ' Religious Instruction ' in Chapter Four.

### MEDICAL PRACTITIONERS

It is sometimes assumed that the medical practitioner, by virtue of some mystical aura surrounding the courtesy title of ' doctor ', is automatically qualified to undertake sex education. Yet there is much truth in the view of the United States Public Health Service that :

The fairly common practice of inviting a physician to speak to boys or to girls may be questioned seriously . . . persons well trained in biology, physiology, psychology and sociology will be able to help much more than any but the very exceptional physician. . . .

The special role of the medical practitioner in sex education (apart from the occasional one who happens to be a naturally good teacher, and should therefore be counted in this context as pedagogue and not physician) is perhaps limited, but nevertheless of great importance. Any other than elementary instruction on the venereal diseases is the doctor's province, as are other problems of sexual pathology. A great deal of work in preparation for marriage, concerning the technique of intercourse, the practice of contraception and so on, is largely medical in nature. But it is fairly clear



## Sex Education

that not all present doctors are fitted for such work.

In this, as in other branches of sex education, the individual personality is all-important, but the suitable person may be much aided by appropriate training. Those medical practitioners who aspire to be sex educators will need to give careful study to the psychological aspects of sex as well as to its physiology ; and they will need sociological insight too. Sex relations and marriage are not purely medical problems. Equally they are problems of politics and economics, of passion and of friendship, of intellectual companionship and mutual respect. Is it too much to hope that medical training might in the future pay more attention to these and other related matters ? No doubt, as in the training of teachers, there is the difficulty of already overcrowded syllabuses. But would not some little study along these lines be of more value to the general practitioner and his patients than a painfully acquired familiarity with the fine details of human anatomy ? The answer would appear to be such an unqualified affirmative that it is to be hoped that medical practitioners will follow the example of the teachers who, up and down the country, are attending special courses to help to equip themselves to undertake sex education.

### NURSES AND HEALTH VISITORS

Particularly in rural areas, the district nurses and health visitors could do much to bring about a more enlightened attitude to sex among the parents with whom they come into contact. When a new baby is expected, they can suggest that the other children be told the truth about it ; and when it has arrived, they can give enlightened advice on such matters as toilet training and infantile masturbation. But to be really helpful to the mothers they meet, they will in most cases need further preparation themselves. Having already a good background knowledge, it should be fairly easy for them to extend their understanding. In the future



## Educating the Educators

this extra field should be part of their training ; for the present it can probably best be met by special refresher courses.

### SCHOOL DOCTORS AND NURSES

The school doctor and nurse are in a position rather different from their colleagues in general practice. They can, by virtue of their positions, co-operate continually with the teacher and the parent. If the doctor knows that the pupils have received instruction on matters of sex, he can, during his periodical examinations, discuss with the boys the questions of seminal emissions and masturbation, quite freely and to good effect. Likewise the school doctor or nurse can instruct the girls the more effectively in the hygiene of menstruation. But more than medical knowledge and nursing skill are required. There is needed an understanding of the feelings of adolescents, an ability to explain things simply — and a tact which knows not only what questions to ask, but when to refrain from asking any. There is needed, in fact, a widening of the whole conception of the role of doctors and nurses, and a correspondingly wider training.

### THE KEY WORKERS

Who is to carry out the special training of these different categories of educators ? What a paragon seems needed — a biologist-psychologist-educationist-sociologist-physician and much else, all rolled into one ! It has, however, been found in practice that a team of three, each with different qualifications and experiences, can deal fairly adequately with the needs of most groups. A biologist with teaching and youth club experience, a physician with a knowledge of psychology and some understanding of educational methods, and a social worker with a background knowledge of biology and psychology and a real familiarity with the problems of people of all ages — such a team can do a great deal.



## Sex Education

Since there are very few such or similar teams in existence in Great Britain to-day, it would seem to be one of our most urgent tasks to constitute more. There can be no question of mere superficial training for these key workers. They must be people of fairly high academic status ; they must be people of wide vision and warm human understanding ; they must be people intellectually alive and emotionally balanced. These are high demands — but sex education is a high calling. Exacting as they are, the demands are not impossible to meet. Hidden away in the ranks of our teachers, our doctors and our social workers there must be many men and women with the requisite personalities, qualifications and experience. To find them, and to arrange for them to devote their full attention to this work, is a step that should be taken without delay.



## Appendix I

### Tentative Scheme for Sex Education<sup>1</sup>

AN attempt is here made to present in tabular form a summary of the main factors relevant to sex education. Such an attempt invites criticism, for it is obviously impossible to pigeon-hole a complex matter in this way ; but the advantages of a skeleton are considerable, albeit flesh and blood are also needed to give it life.

Perhaps a word of explanation is necessary as to the subdivision of the individual's career into stages. It is a truism that life is a continuum, and to a certain extent, therefore, any such division is liable to be misleading. But although physiological and psychological development may be continuous, they do not proceed at a uniform rate. There are periods of slow maturation and others of rapid acceleration, and occasions such as the pubertal increase of endocrine activity, which mark minor revolutions within the major evolution.

We are, moreover, not merely organisms, but highly social organisms, and this consideration introduces definite discontinuities. The transitions from home to school and from school to work, the entering into engagement and marriage, the attainment of parenthood — these are occasions just as important from our point of view as the individual's continuous growth. For the aim here is not to draw up an organically valid scheme of ontogenetic stages, but to provide a practical basis for sex education. It is not suggested that the present subdivisions have any validity beyond the field for which they are specifically devised. Nor is it expected that a tabular scheme such as this can do more than provide a few convenient pegs — it is for each individual educator to decide just what to hang on them.

It is sufficiently obvious that a scheme of this sort can be nothing more than a tentative essay, and as such only is it presented.

<sup>1</sup> This scheme owes so much to Mrs. F. M. Bibby that she must be regarded as its co-author.



# TENTATIVE SCHEME

DEVELOPMENTAL CHARACTERISTICS			STAGE
PHYSIOLOGICAL	PSYCHOLOGICAL	SOCIAL	
<p>Rapid bodily growth, including great growth in nervous system.</p> <p>Almost complete dependence on mother.</p> <p>Supine state, preventing any great extension of known world.</p> <p>Reacting instinctively to internal and external stimuli.</p>	<p>Sexual interest mainly oral in nature, leading to thumb-sucking, etc.</p> <p>Activities normally accompanied by pleasurable sensations.</p> <p>Need for feeling of security.</p>	<p>Does not yet regard self as distinct from surrounding world.</p> <p>Entirely, but not consciously, self-centred.</p>	<p>0 years</p> <p>S U C K L I N G</p> <p>about <math>\frac{3}{4}</math> years</p>
<p>Bodily growth still rapid, including nervous system.</p> <p>Developing primary dentition.</p> <p>Completion of weaning.</p> <p>Sitting, standing and eventually crawling and walking; leading to great extension of known world.</p> <p>Tendency to digital exploration of body, with much pulling and probing; leading to discovery of sex organs.</p> <p>Acquiring control of bladder and bowel movements.</p>	<p>Sexual interest mainly oral and anal in nature, often leading to play with faeces.</p> <p>Seeking sensual substitutes for breast, leading to thumb-sucking and masturbation.</p> <p>Emergence of many new patterns of behaviour, often purposive in character.</p> <p>Developing emotions of fear, affection, jealousy and anxiety.</p> <p>Developing interest in words.</p> <p>Developing understanding of commands and prohibitions.</p>	<p>Gaining acquaintance with the external world.</p> <p>Becoming conscious towards end of period of own place as a member of the family.</p>	<p>I N F A N T</p> <p>about 2 years</p>
<p>Bodily growth slower and fairly constant, but still considerable nervous growth.</p> <p>Acquiring facility in walking and running, leading to great extension of known world and to increased self-confidence.</p> <p>Completing control of bladder and bowel movements.</p> <p>Great development of verbal expression (previously limited by inadequate nerve-muscle control and co-ordination).</p>	<p>Sexual interest becoming phallic in nature.</p> <p>Enjoyment of muscular activity.</p> <p>Becoming more aware of self as an individual, often leading to 'showing off'.</p> <p>Strong imitative tendency.</p> <p>Developing emotions of pride and shame.</p> <p>Need for expressions of approval by parents, etc.</p> <p>Developing sense of time.</p> <p>Developing memory.</p> <p>Great development of verbal comprehension.</p> <p>Beginning of logical understanding (wanting to know "why?") and ability to appreciate reasoning, and hence to 'make bargains' about behaviour.</p> <p>Tendency to resist over-meticulous toilet discipline.</p> <p>Developing interest in own and others' bodies, leading to many questions about sex organs, birth, etc.</p> <p>Becoming capable of some sustained concentration and effort.</p>	<p>Making friends with other children (in some cases, at nursery school).</p> <p>Acquiring some degree of conformity with domestic routine and conventions.</p> <p>Making spontaneous displays of affection.</p> <p>Developing protective attitude towards younger siblings.</p> <p>Beginning dramatic and imaginative play.</p>	<p>T O D D L E R</p> <p>about 5 years</p>



# OF SEX EDUCATION

EDUCATORS	APPROPRIATE EDUCATION		
	KNOWLEDGE	HABITS	ATTITUDES
<b>MOTHER</b> NURSE FATHER Siblings		Satisfactory establishment of breast-feeding. Regularity of bodily functions, including voiding.	Bowel and bladder movements in no way 'dirty' or 'nasty'. Sex organs in no way 'forbidden territory'.
<b>MOTHER</b> NURSE FATHER Siblings	Towards end of stage, beginning to know names of parts of body.	Increasing control of bladder and bowel movements. Occupying hands with other objects, thus avoiding excessive thumb-sucking and masturbation.	Regarding the body and its functions as completely normal and natural. Friendliness towards other members of family.
<b>MOTHER</b> FATHER NURSERY TEACHER Siblings & playmates	Names of parts of body, including external genitals of both sexes. Elements of understanding of bodily functions. Baby grows in womb inside mother. Baby is born via an exit between the legs. Simple understanding of family structure and of the duties of each of its members. Knowledge of existence of males and females among domestic animals, and of growth of young inside mother mammals.	Completion of control and regularity of bladder and bowel movements. Sleeping alone and rising promptly on waking. Practice of simple health rules. Frankness about body within family, but some reticence in public. Use of some scientific terms for sex organs. Reasonable degree of obedience. Exercise of some self-restraint. Taking some little share in domestic duties. Making an effort to achieve some success in undertakings. Intelligent observation of Nature.	Nudity in no way indecent, but not suitable for all occasions. Pregnancy and birth perfectly natural and proper. Arrival of new baby a 'family event' for which all prepare. Affection and consideration for others. Willingness to share possessions and to co-operate in activities. Regarding domestic harmony as the norm. Confidence in ability to achieve success. Interest in and wonder at Nature.



# TENTATIVE SCHEME

DEVELOPMENTAL CHARACTERISTICS			STAGE
PHYSIOLOGICAL	PSYCHOLOGICAL	SOCIAL	
<p>Bodily growth still rather slow. Developing secondary dentition. Improving visual co-ordination. Great bodily energy, often expressed in tendency to 'exploration'.</p>	<p>Sexual interest largely latent, becoming homosexual. Great curiosity about all things. Need for sense of achievement, expressed by making many objects—often without any very careful finishing. Tendency to acquisitiveness.</p>	<p>Very great development of social maturity, owing largely to beginning school. Developing co-operative tendencies.</p>	<p>about 5 years</p> <p>B S C H O O L</p> <p>about 8 years</p>
<p>Bodily growth still rather slow. Increasing control and co-ordination of motor functions, facilitating greater physical adventurousness.</p>	<p>Sexual interest largely latent or homosexual. Becoming critical of own efforts, desiring quality as well as quantity in achievement. Becoming willing to accept friendly criticism from others. Great interest in 'how things work', leading to renewal at a higher level of questions about birth, sex, mating, etc. Continuing acquisitiveness.</p>	<p>In some cases, entering new social unit of young children's organisation. Tendency to form small societies or 'gangs'. Increasing social reliability.</p>	<p>A D O L E S C E N T</p> <p>P R E</p> <p>about 11-12 years</p>
<p>Period of great general bodily growth, making great demands on the organism. Onset of endocrine changes of adolescence, with development of secondary sexual characters (earlier with girls than boys). Alternation of periods of great activity and of lassitude.</p>	<p>Arousing of sexual emotions, at first largely homosexual and later heterosexual. Sometimes embarrassment at development of secondary sexual characters. Very changeable interests. Tendency to moodiness. Tendency to 'hero worship'.</p> <p><i>Chakrabarti</i></p>	<p>Transition to secondary school, leading to increased self-reliance and sense of self-importance. Continuing in 'gangs'.</p>	<p>A D O L E S C E N T</p> <p>Y O U N G E R</p> <p>about 14-16 years</p>



# OF SEX EDUCATION—(contd.)

EDUCATORS	APPROPRIATE EDUCATION		
	KNOWLEDGE	HABITS	ATTITUDES
<b>PARENTS</b> <b>TEACHERS</b> Siblings & playmates	Mother contributes egg ; father contributes sperm. Penis placed in vagina during mating. Elements of explanation of health habits already established. Simple understanding of social relationships outside the home. Deepening of knowledge of Nature.	Continuation at a higher level of habits already established. Loyalty to comrades. Discriminating between own and others' possessions.	Continuation and deepening of attitudes already established. Lack of embarrassment and furtiveness. Admiration for vigour and smartness. Desire for personal health and cleanliness. Willingness to share possessions with others.
<b>PARENTS</b> <b>TEACHERS</b> Siblings & friends Leaders of young children's organisations	Gradual acquisition of greater knowledge of bodily functioning, including sex and reproduction ; and (towards end of period) of significance of menstruation, seminal emission, erection, etc. Very elementary knowledge of principles of heredity. Simple understanding of the contributions made to society by both sexes. Simple knowledge and understanding of functions of living organisms ; especially courtship, mating, embryonic development, parental care and family life.	Continuation of earlier habits. Regarding sex as a normal part of life, and not as something exceptional. Carrying out activities at a level of high quality.	Continuation of earlier attitudes. Wonder at life's manifestations, including sex. Satisfaction in being of own sex (specially important in girls). Pleasurable anticipation of forthcoming changes of adolescence, as indicating approach to maturity. Dissatisfaction with low standard of achievement. Pleasure in vigorous and creative activities.
<b>PARENTS</b> <b>TEACHERS</b> Siblings & friends Leaders of children's organisations School doctor & nurse	Consolidation and systematisation of knowledge already acquired. Simple understanding of the influence of endocrine secretions on body and emotions. Further details of hygiene of menstruation (especially for girls). Understanding of true facts about seminal emission and masturbation (especially for boys). Further knowledge of genetics. Elementary facts about the venereal diseases (in connection with disease, not sex). Simple ideas about the value of family life. Understanding of what relationships are desirable between boys and girls.	Continuation of earlier habits. Practice of vigorous and creative sports and hobbies. Co-operation with other members of family and of other social groups. Helping in domestic duties (boys as well as girls). Increased care and solicitude for younger children and for parents (especially mother during pregnancy). Discrimination in selection of friends and 'heroes'. Discrimination in selection of reading material, etc.	Continuation of earlier attitudes. Considerate attitude to other sex. Pride in fact of gradually becoming adult. Distaste for 'smut'. Menstruation and seminal emission perfectly normal and in no way 'nasty'. General enthusiasm for sports and hobbies.



# TENTATIVE SCHEME

DEVELOPMENTAL CHARACTERISTICS			STAGE
PHYSIOLOGICAL	PSYCHOLOGICAL	SOCIAL	
<p>Slowing down of general bodily growth.</p> <p>Continuation and completion of changes begun in early adolescence (earlier with girls than boys).</p>	<p>Intensification of sexual emotions, usually heterosexual.</p> <p>Pride in 'having a boy' or 'having a girl'.</p> <p>Tendency to be very critical of parents, all adults, and society in general.</p> <p>Tendency to aggressiveness, 'touchiness', etc.</p> <p>Seeking for older persons who are 'understanding'.</p> <p>Development of altruism and in some cases of religious intensity.</p> <p>In some cases, tendency to extreme intellectualism.</p> <p>In some cases, tendency to rather aimless hedonism.</p> <p>Tendency to regard own problems as being unique, leading to a sort of 'moral loneliness'.</p>	<p>Transition (in most cases) from school to work, leading to increased sense of maturity and independence, and to exposure to cruder sexual influences.</p> <p>Tendency for home to fade temporarily into background, in favour of other social groupings (for example, clubs).</p> <p>Tendency to transfer from unisexual 'gangs' to mixed 'sets'.</p> <p>Frequent changes of friends in search for best social milieu.</p> <p>Need for considerable emancipation from social control by parents, etc.</p>	<p>about 14-16 years</p> <p style="text-align: center;">O L D E R A D O L E S C E N T</p>
<p>Mutual nervous-endocrine stimulation.</p>	<p>Enrichment and deepening of sexual feelings.</p> <p>Fusing of feelings of sexual desire with those of tenderness, thoughtfulness, protectiveness, etc.</p> <p>Searching for a personality which will be complementary to own and meet own emotional needs.</p> <p>Tendency to adjust own habits, attitudes, etc. to suit those of partner.</p> <p>Tendency to idealise partner.</p>	<p>Tending to segregate out from 'set'.</p> <p>Beginning to think concretely of setting up own home and rearing own family.</p>	<p>about 18-20 years</p> <p style="text-align: center;">C O U R T S H I P</p>



# OF SEX EDUCATION—(contd.)

EDUCATORS	APPROPRIATE EDUCATION		
	KNOWLEDGE	HABITS	ATTITUDES
<b>PARENTS</b> <b>SIBLINGS &amp; FRIENDS</b> <b>YOUTH LEADERS and/or TEACHERS</b> Industrial welfare workers Medical adviser Ad hoc lecturers	<p>Understanding of strength of sexual urge and of necessity for self-control (girls to realise how easily boys may be excited; boys to realise how deeply girls may feel).</p> <p>Fuller understanding of masturbation, including emotional aspects and aids to discarding habit.</p> <p>Further facts about genetics.</p> <p>Appreciation of distinction between maturity of gonads and full physical, emotional and social maturity.</p> <p>Simple understanding of amatory aspects of sex.</p> <p>Understanding of dangers of excessive 'necking'.</p> <p>Simple ideas about sublimation of sexual urge.</p> <p>Social and moral implications of marriage, illegitimacy, promiscuity and prostitution.</p> <p>Further facts about the venereal diseases, especially how to avoid them and what to do if risk is run.</p> <p>For those still at school, much fuller study of biological, psychological, sociological and ethical aspects of sex.</p>	<p>Continuation of earlier habits.</p> <p>Self-expression and sublimation through physical recreation, music, drama, etc., and intellectual interest in science, sociology, arts, etc.</p> <p>Courtesy to other sex, without exaggerated ideas of 'chivalry'.</p> <p>Acceptance of increased responsibilities along with increased privileges.</p> <p>Basing actions on careful consideration of all relevant factors.</p> <p>Self-discipline and self-criticism in all things.</p> <p>Discrimination in selection of films, radio, etc.</p>	<p>Continuation of earlier attitudes.</p> <p>Boy-and-girl friendships perfectly natural but needing discretion.</p> <p>Regarding sex as a great creative force for good.</p> <p>Regarding adolescence as a period of great opportunity in attaining full maturity.</p> <p>Regarding friends as whole personalities, not merely as males or females.</p> <p>Contempt for obscenity, without prudery or priggishness.</p> <p>Disgust at moral cowardice, hypocrisy, injustice, etc.</p> <p>High ideals and ambitions in all things.</p>
<b>SWEET-HEART</b> <b>PARENTS</b> <b>MARRIAGE GUIDANCE COUNSELLORS</b> <b>MEDICAL ADVISERS</b> Youth leaders Ad hoc lecturers	<p>Elements of marital technique (including need for delicacy and restraint on honeymoon).</p> <p>Understanding of emotional and sexual peculiarities of the two sexes in general and of the partner in particular.</p> <p>Knowledge of physical and mental health condition of self and of partner.</p> <p>More detailed understanding of the inadvisability of excessive love-making short of intercourse.</p> <p>Understanding that sexual relations constitute only a part of married life.</p> <p>Understanding of economic implications of marriage and parenthood.</p> <p>Understanding of family as a social unit.</p> <p>How to run a home (necessary for man as well as for woman).</p> <p>Knowledge of persons, organisations and books, to turn to for further information and guidance.</p>	<p>Continuation of earlier habits.</p> <p>Avoidance of situations likely to lead to great sexual excitement and stress.</p> <p>Self-discipline in all things, including sexual behaviour.</p> <p>Close observation so as to understand partner's personal idiosyncrasies.</p> <p>Cultivation of interests and activities in common.</p>	<p>Continuation of earlier attitudes.</p> <p>Willingness to compromise in reaching agreement on matters such as financial interdependence of spouses, whether wife should go out to work, what is the proper division of domestic duties, family planning, etc.</p>



# TENTATIVE SCHEME

DEVELOPMENTAL CHARACTERISTICS			STAGE
PHYSIOLOGICAL	PSYCHOLOGICAL	SOCIAL	
<p>Gradual attainment of mutually satisfactory sexual relations. Eventually 'change of life'.</p>	<p>Increasing emotional adjustment between couple. Development of mutual love, consideration and respect. Gradual recognition of partner as a real person, with faults and failings, not a perfect ideal; followed by realisation that this need not make marriage less satisfactory. Difficulties due to 'change of life'.</p>	<p>Home interests beginning to replace outside interests such as clubs. Often considerable limitation of social activities, partly for financial reasons.</p>	M A R R I A G E
<p>Endocrine changes in mother, consequent on pregnancy, birth and lactation.</p>	<p>Usually a strong maternal instinct and gradual growth of paternal feeling.</p>	<p>Completion of social unit of family. Usually some considerable limitation of social activities while children are young. Sometimes dangerous tendency to dominate children emotionally.</p>	P A R E N T H O O D



# OF SEX EDUCATION—(contd.)

EDUCATORS	APPROPRIATE EDUCATION		
	KNOWLEDGE	HABITS	ATTITUDES
<b>SPOUSE</b> <b>MEDICAL ADVISERS</b> <b>FAMILY PLANNING CLINICIANS</b> <i>Ad hoc lecturers</i>	<p>Fuller understanding of sexual technique, especially of ways of achieving fuller harmony.</p> <p>Understanding that full sexual happiness usually takes some time to achieve.</p> <p>Understanding of variations in sexual feeling (for example, with menstruation, pregnancy, lactation, menopause).</p> <p>Parentcraft instruction (for both sexes).</p> <p>Simple understanding of child psychology.</p>	<p>Ready recognition of any emotional stress in spouse, with increased tenderness.</p> <p>Frankness about important differences of opinion on conduct of home; toleration of differences.</p> <p>Developing mutual interests and leisure-time occupations.</p> <p>Recognition by husband that wife has usually sacrificed more in way of independence.</p>	<p>Consideration in all things towards spouse, and in particular determination not to 'force the pace' in sexual relations.</p> <p>Regarding spouse as still being a sweetheart.</p> <p>Willingness to forgive and forget.</p> <p>Willingness to allow spouse opportunities for independent intellectual, cultural and social activities.</p> <p>Determination not to let changes (for example, parenthood, menopause) interfere with fullness of life.</p>
<b>SPOUSE</b> <b>CHILDREN</b> <b>MATERNITY &amp; CHILD WELFARE CLINICIANS</b> <b>HEALTH VISITORS</b> <b>TEACHERS OF CHILDREN</b> <b>MEDICAL ADVISERS</b> <i>Ad hoc lecturers</i>	<p>Further parentcraft instruction.</p> <p>Fuller knowledge of child psychology and child development (especially in infancy and adolescence).</p> <p>Understanding of aims, methods and possibilities in sex education.</p> <p>How much information to impart at different stages of child development.</p> <p>What questions to expect of children, and how to answer them.</p> <p>Knowledge of what is done in schools, youth clubs, etc.</p>	<p>Husband taking fair share of extra duties arising from advent of children.</p> <p>Adjusting degree of parental control to needs of different stages of child development.</p> <p>Honesty towards children in all things.</p> <p>Acting in harmony with spouse in child rearing.</p>	<p>Special considerateness for wife on part of husband, in view of her extra responsibilities.</p> <p>Willingness for children gradually to achieve independence from parents.</p> <p>Friendliness to and affection for children, without overburdening them with emotion or spoiling them.</p> <p>Willingness to move with the times, even at the risk of offending grandparents.</p>

*N.B.*—In the column headed 'Educators' an attempt has been made to indicate roughly, by means of differing sizes of print, the relative importance of the different categories, but this is naturally not intended to be taken quantitatively. There is one deliberate omission from this column — that of clergymen and other religious workers. This is because for those with no religious beliefs they scarcely count, while for those of deep faith they are of very great importance — and the table is an effort at laying a foundation which *all* may accept, although many will doubtless wish to add to the building.



## Appendix II

### Suggestions for Practical Activities

It has been thought worth while to gather together here various suggestions for practical activities which may be helpful in the development of an understanding of and proper attitude towards sex and family life. Some are obviously most appropriate to a particular age, a particular sex or a particular place, but no attempt is here made at any such classification. It is for the individual educator, knowing his individual charges, to make the appropriate choice.

#### CARE AND BREEDING OF ANIMALS

Aquatics, amphibians and reptiles are particularly easily kept (for example, sticklebacks, snails, newts, frogs, lizards). Insects can be reared from eggs (for example, butterflies, moths), or throughout their life-cycle (for example, houseflies, bluebottles, bees, stick insects). It is sometimes possible to breed birds (for example, pigeons, domestic fowl). Mammals should also be bred (for example, mice, guinea-pigs, rabbits, pigs).

#### EXAMINATION OF MICROSCOPE PREPARATIONS

These can be prepared anew, or purchased from a dealer. They may be examined by individual microscopes or by micro-projection. Suitable preparations are : sections of ovary, testis, umbilical cord ; ova, spermatozoa ; fertilisation ; stages of division of *Amoeba*, yeast, fertilised ovum (for example, sea urchin's) ; nuclei and chromosomes.

#### DISSECTION OF ANIMALS, INCLUDING MAMMALS

Dissection is emotionally repugnant to some children and it should not be forced upon them. Animals such as dogs and cats, which are often kept as pets, should not be used. Frogs, fish, rabbits, rats and mice are suitable — but preferably not animals



## Suggestions for Practical Activities

which the children themselves have bred. In any event, it should always be made perfectly clear that death has been painless. It is often valuable to dissect a pregnant female.

### EXAMINATION OF EMBRYOS

Museum specimens of embryos can be demonstrated, including a human foetus. This latter is usually a source of real delight to children — “ Isn’t it lovely ! ” they exclaim. In some cases (for example, trout, frog, fowl) the growth of the egg through the embryonic stages can be observed.

### MANUAL ACTIVITIES

Clay or ‘ Plasticine ’ models of segmentation of eggs, embryos at various stages of development, etc. Cardboard and wooden models of nursery furniture, clinic lay-outs, etc. ‘ Baby clothes ’ for dolls. Preparation for ‘ the new baby ’ — help with sewing and knitting ; repainting ‘ Moses basket ’ or cot ; distempering mother’s bedroom or nursery ; extra little jobs for mother. After the birth — help with preparation of bath, hanging out napkins ; when baby is older, help with bathing, take out in pram, etc.

### NUMERICAL OBSERVATIONS AND EXPERIMENTS

Counting number of florets in daisy, dandelion ; number of seeds in sunflower ; number of eggs in mass of frog spawn ; number of spermatozoa on microscopic field of vision ; numbers in litters of various animals. Simple experiments on heredity in garden pea, primrose, *Drosophila*, *Gammarus*, mouse, guinea-pig. Statistical observations relevant to heredity — from tossing coins, picking various combinations of coloured beads from boxes and of playing cards from packs, etc. Records of growth in weight, height, etc.

### EXCURSIONS AND VISITS

To museums, botanical and zoological gardens, farms, fish hatcheries, egg incubator plants, piggeries, breeding stations, infant welfare centres, clinics, nursery schools, hospitals, etc. The groups must be small, both in order to get maximum value



## Sex Education

from the visits and in order not to inconvenience the hosts. Follow up with making individual or group record sheets, books, charts, etc.

### INDIVIDUAL AND GROUP PROJECTS

Collect newspaper cuttings about twins, triplets, etc. ; cases of bigamy and divorce ; birth-rate, infantile and maternal mortality-rates, population trends ; opening of maternity homes, welfare centres, clinics, nurseries. Gather information about these and other topics from parents, teachers, youth leaders, medical practitioners, nurses, social workers, official and voluntary organisations.

Prepare from this material scrap-books, charts, wall newspapers, models, etc. Make suggestions for improvements in these fields.

### DISCUSSIONS AND DEBATES

About co-education, boarding schools *v.* day schools, should boys learn cookery, should children be expected to help in the home, on heredity and environment, should women have careers, pre-marital chastity, marriage, divorce, family limitation, family allowances, should the mother employ a nurse, should the father help with the care of baby, medical examinations before marriage, compulsory notification and treatment of venereal disease, etc. Keep watch on Press and radio for current topics.

### FILMS

There are some excellent biological films of the life cycles of many animals and plants. Show also films of child development, educational and medical services, of modes of life of people in other parts of the world. Hold discussion groups upon the attitudes to sex, marriage, family life, etc., implied in current films at the local cinema.



## Appendix III

### Sources of Material and Advice

#### A. THE CENTRAL COUNCIL FOR HEALTH EDUCATION

TAVISTOCK HOUSE, TAVISTOCK SQUARE, LONDON, W.C.1

THIS is the recognised body for health education (including sex education) in England and Wales. It can provide leaflets, pamphlets, posters, charts, periodicals, films and film-strips, lecturers and expert advice. In the areas of those local authorities (the great majority) which contribute to the Council's funds these services are available free or at a reduced charge.

#### B. OTHER BODIES IN GREAT BRITAIN

Material and/or advice valuable in sex education (using the phrase in its widest sense) is also available from the bodies listed below. In each case details should be obtained from the body concerned.

Alliance of Honour, 112, City Road, London, E.C.1.

British Council of Churches, 56, Bloomsbury Street, London, W.C.1.

British Social Hygiene Council, Tavistock House, Tavistock Square, London, W.C.1.

Bureau of Human Heredity, 115, Gower Street, London, W.C.1.

Catholic Women's League, 160, Windsor House, Victoria Street, London, S.W.1.

Church of England Moral Welfare Council, 36, Victoria Street, London, S.W.1.

Divorce Law Reform Union, 55, Chancery Lane, London, W.C.2.

Eugenics Society, 69, Eccleston Square, London, S.W.1.

Family Planning Association, 69, Eccleston Square, London, S.W.1.

Gaumont British Instructional Films Ltd., Lime Grove, Shepherd's Bush, London, W.12.

H.M. Stationery Office, Kingsway, London, W.C.2.



## Sex Education

- Home and School Council of Great Britain, Marrington Hall,  
Chirbury, nr. Montgomery.
- Institute of Child Psychology, 26, Warwick Avenue, London, W.9.
- Institute of Medical Psychology, Tavistock Clinic, Kidderpore  
Avenue, Hampstead, London, N.W.3.
- Institute for the Scientific Treatment of Delinquency, 17, Man-  
chester Street, London, W.1.
- Jewish Association for Protection of Women and Girls, 63,  
Mansell Street, London, E.1.
- Jewish Health Organisation of Great Britain, 19, Rampart Street,  
London, E.1.
- Kodak Films Ltd., Kodak House, Kingsway, London, W.C.2.
- Marriage Guidance Council, 78, Duke Street, London, W.1.
- National Adoption Society, 4, Baker Street, London, W.1.
- National Association of Maternity and Child Welfare Centres,  
117, Piccadilly, London, W.1.
- National Council for the Care of the Unmarried Mother and  
Her Child, 117, Piccadilly, London, W.1.
- National Society for the Prevention of Venereal Diseases, 47,  
Nottingham Place, London, W.1.
- National Union of Teachers, Hamilton House, Mabledon Place,  
London, W.C.1.
- Nursery School Association of Great Britain, Hamilton House,  
Bidborough Street, London, W.C.1.
- Population Investigation Committee, 69, Eccleston Square,  
London, S.W.1.
- Provisional National Council for Mental Health, 39, Queen Anne  
Street, London, W.1.
- Scottish Council for Health Education, 242, West George Street,  
Glasgow, C.2.
- Society for Sex Education and Guidance, 43, Upper Brook  
Street, London, W.1.



# Sources of Material and Advice

## C. BRITISH COMMONWEALTH

The following bodies are interested in sex education :

### *Australasia*

Health Association of Australasia, 105, Collins Street, Melbourne.

Racial Hygiene Association of New South Wales, 14, Martin Place, Sydney.

West Australian Council for Combating Venereal Diseases, c/o University of Western Australia, Perth.

New Zealand Social Hygiene Association, 140, Fendalton Road, Christchurch, N.Z.

### *Canada*

Health League of Canada, 111, Avenue Road, Toronto.

### *India*

Baroda Social Hygiene Council, c/o Sanitary Commissioner's Office, Baroda.

Bombay Social Hygiene Council, 254, Bellasis Road, Bombay.

National Health Association of Southern India, Royapettah, Madras.

### *South Africa*

South Africa Red Cross Society, P.O. Box 3266, Johannesburg.

Capetown Society for Combating Venereal Disease, c/o City Health Department, 12, Keerom Street, Capetown.

Durban Social Hygiene Council, P.O. Box 1270, Durban, Natal.

Southern Rhodesian Social Hygiene Council, P.O. Box 412, Bulawayo, S.R.

### *Others*

British Women's Social Welfare League, 4th Avenue, Belleville, Barbados.

Cyprus Social Hygiene Council, Nicosia, Cyprus.

Malta Council for Combating Venereal Disease, c/o Central Hospital, Valetta, Malta.

Trinidad Social Hygiene Council, c/o Health Department, Port of Spain, Trinidad, B.W.I.



# Sex Education

## D. UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

Material and/or advice on various aspects of sex education may be obtained from the following :

American Institute of Family Relations, 607, South Hill Street,  
Los Angeles.

American Medical Association, 535, North Dearborn Street,  
Chicago.

American Social Hygiene Association, 1790, Broadway, New  
York.

Children's Bureau, U.S. Dept. of Labor, Washington, D.C.

Kansas State Board of Health, Topeka, Kansas.

National Education Association, 1201, 16th Street, N.W.,  
Washington, D.C.

Teachers' College, Columbia University, New York.

U.S. Office of Education, Washington, D.C.

U.S. Public Health Service, Washington, D.C.



## Appendix IV

### Specimen Circulars

THE question is often raised, whether or not parents should be circularised in connection with the sex education which it is intended to arrange in the schools for their children. This is naturally a matter for local decision, but in arriving at it there are several important considerations to be borne in mind.

The first is that nothing should be done which would tend to imply that sex education is in any way a 'risky' matter or that there is in the minds of the authority or the teachers any doubt as to its advisability. The second is that the very act of sending a circular is liable to give the pupils the impression that sex education is in some way an isolated and special matter, since their parents are not normally circularised about other aspects of school teaching. The third is that while it may be necessary, in view of local circumstances, to allow those parents who so wish to withdraw their children, care should be taken that the phrasing of the circular does not virtually invite them to do so. The question of the desirability of seeking parental sanction to sex education in the school has been succinctly dealt with by an experienced teacher, who writes :<sup>1</sup>

There arises the vexed question — Shall we first ask the parents' permission before starting a course on reproduction? For several reasons I answer this in the negative. In the first place, I believe it to be unnecessary, for I have generally found parents to be most relieved that the burden has been lifted from them by the school. Many of the mothers realise their own lack of knowledge and the majority shrink from mentioning the subject at all. One of them told me that she had been having sleepless nights for the past three weeks worrying over what she should say. Many of the children give a similar report to that of Betty D., who says, "I have told my mother I know about it and she was very pleased; she said it took a load off her mind." In all my years of experience I have never had a complaint about the lessons, but have received many expressions of gratitude. My second reason against asking

<sup>1</sup> Zoë Dawe, *Health Educ. J.* Vol. 2, No. 1 (January 1944).



## Sex Education

permission is that this action immediately puts the subject into a special category ; this must be avoided at all costs.

Thirdly, a fine crop of problems arises if any replies to the question are in the negative :

- (a) What do you do with the child who is not to attend the course ?
- (b) What does the rest of the class think about this withdrawal ?  
Are all your careful plans to be frustrated as this subject is shown to be a queer secret thing after all ?
- (c) The child who is to be isolated will get the information from the other members of her class, second hand, probably somewhat distorted and certainly in the wrong setting ; her feelings of guilt will be intensified ; her relationship with her parents will be marred.
- (d) Further, the prohibition suggests that the psychological atmosphere in which the child lives is already difficult : if this is so, then the school seems to be her only hope. Where the parents say they wish to tell the child themselves, they seem to have left things rather late. Beginnings must be made in the home in early childhood : left until adolescence is reached, a barrier has been set up between parent and child that may be insurmountable ; again the school seems to be the child's best chance.

Thus where circulars are sent at all they should, unless local circumstances compel the granting of option, aim not so much at asking the parents' permission as at informing them of what is being done and inviting their co-operation.

It is impossible to draw up a model suitable for all occasions, but in this appendix there are given extracts from several circulars which have actually been issued in varying circumstances and each of which has some good features. Their quotation here must not be taken to imply that the author agrees with all they contain. These may serve as guides in drawing up the circular most appropriate for a particular locality (that is, of course, if one is to be issued at all).

### CIRCULAR A

Sent by the principal of a co-educational grammar school to the parents of pupils, shortly before human reproduction is reached in the biology course :

... Some parents have given to their children sufficient instruction on matters of sex to satisfy much of the natural curiosity that they



## Specimen Circulars

have as their development advances. Others, for various reasons, prefer not to give any information, and in many cases the knowledge given is not adequate to allay curiosity. It frequently happens, especially in the case of the boys, that pupils gain most of their information from playmates in an inaccurate and objectionable way.

I have come to the conclusion that the best time for boys and girls to be instructed in the matter of sex is before they have embarked on the period of adolescence, and that the most natural approach is through biological teaching applied to a series of plants and animals and finally to human beings. In these lessons we deal with all the main functions of the organism, including that of reproduction, and the transition of the idea from the lower animal life to man is comparatively simple, though one that rarely occurs without specific guidance. The form in which your son/daughter is at present has arrived at such a point in their Nature Study that the question of human sex relationship can naturally be introduced, and the purpose of this communication is to know whether, should such sex instruction be given, you would wish your son/daughter to participate. . . .

*[Here follow suggestions as to method, and a tear-off form for return by the parent.]*

### CIRCULAR B

Sent by the principal of a boy's grammar school to the parents of pupils, shortly after human reproduction was reached in the biology course :

. . . . During the year the boys in the Upper and Lower Removes in their work in Natural History with Mr. — and Mr. — spent some time studying the human body, its organs and their functions. The final lessons have been concerned with reproduction — in flowers, animals and the human species.

About the age of eleven or twelve, boys begin to develop a natural interest in their bodies and in their own origin. It is of the greatest importance that this interest should not become secretive and morbid, and should not be distorted and misdirected by false information gained from others of their own age who are ignorant of or are only partially acquainted with the facts.

Reproduction in the human species forms a natural climax to a course in biology. The facts can be put before the boys clearly and without embarrassment, as the whole subject arises naturally from what has been studied before.

I am attaching a brief summary of the lesson which was given to your son's form a few days ago, as you may like to make use of this opportunity for discussing the subject with your son. . . .



# Sex Education

## CIRCULAR C

Sent by the principal of a boys' grammar school to the parents of pupils, prior to a parents' meeting and talks by visiting lecturers :

... The Parents' Committee has asked me to arrange for lectures in Sex Education to be given to those boys in the School whose Parents desire it. I have, therefore, been in touch with the Central Council for Health Education who undertake instruction of this sort. There will be a meeting for Parents in the School Hall on Monday, — September, at 6.30 P.M., when the Education Officer, of the Central Council for Health Education, Mr. —, will speak. He will review the whole question and an opportunity will be given for Parents to ask questions.

It is intended that appropriate instruction shall be given to boys of all ages in the School, by lecturers from the Council, during the winter term. There will be three lectures for boys in each age-group.

If you would like your boy to attend these lectures, please fill in the form below and return it to me at the School. Part of the cost of the lectures is being borne by the — County Council, but the rest must be borne by the School. There will, therefore, be a charge of 1s. to be paid by each boy attending the lectures. . . .

*[Here follows a tear-off form for return by the parents.]*

## CIRCULAR D

Sent by the principal of a co-educational grammar school to the parents of pupils, prior to talks by visiting lecturers :

... Educational Authorities are gravely concerned, as are all interested in the well-being of our youth, about the necessity for some clear and helpful sex education. The advertisement columns of the Press remind us that Venereal Disease is an increasing menace to our national health and much of this is undoubtedly due to ignorance. Our young people are increasingly subject to suggestion by much of what is printed or shown in the cinemas where they are being confronted by complicated problems of sex relationships. Much of their sex education comes at the street corner or in undesirable ways.

*[Here follow suggestions as to method.]*

I write to you because we are anxious to enlist your sympathetic understanding of what we hope to do. We feel confident that you will not wish to object to your boy/girl receiving this very straightforward and safe-guarding knowledge. . . .



# Specimen Circulars

## CIRCULAR E

Sent by the principal and school medical officer of a boys' boarding school to the parents of pupils, two or three months prior to entry :

. . . . We should be very grateful if you would give the following matter your careful consideration before your son becomes a member of the school next term.

It is sometimes found that before a boy comes to a Public School at the age of 13-14, he has received most, if not all, of his knowledge of sexual matters from other boys ; in many cases this method of acquiring essential knowledge does not lead to any particularly harmful results, but it is clearly highly desirable that such knowledge should come directly from a much more reliable source — either from his parents or from some other person whom the boy knows well.

We do not wish to dictate how this instruction should be given, but we should like to place before you the point of view of the Senior Housemasters and ourselves, which is based on the experience gained in dealing with a great number and great variety of boys.

*[Here follow suggestions as to methods.]*

We should be glad if you would inform your son's future Housemaster what instruction he has received, and to what extent you consider further instruction should be given to him. It is essential that we should know just where he stands with regard to this matter.



## Appendix V

### Specimen Lectures

It is only after very careful consideration that it has been decided to incorporate this appendix of specimen lectures. The arguments against are very obvious. No standard set of lectures can possibly be suited to all audiences or all speakers. Every talk should clearly be devised in the light of knowledge of local conditions and should reflect the personality of the lecturer, for it will be the resulting relevance and liveliness that will carry conviction. There is, moreover, the risk that some readers without the requisite personality, knowledge or understanding may be tempted to approach sex education by the easy but fatal road of copying ready-made lectures. But against this is to be set the real desire expressed by many educators for such a guide, not to serve as a substitute for individual thought, but to reinforce it with the results of experience. On the whole it seems worth while running the former risk in order to perform the latter service.

The lectures given here are recorded as actually delivered, and are designedly colloquial in style. Each lecture is preceded by a brief description of the occasion of delivery. They cover the two types of audience most likely to be addressed by youth leaders and teachers — namely, members of youth organisations and parents of pupils.

#### LECTURE A

This forms the first of a series of three talks for older adolescents and young adults. It was delivered to a mixed audience, and illustrated by the film 'Sex in Life'. Its aim was to achieve a feeling of confidence between lecturer and audience before dealing in more detail in succeeding talks with sex in humans, to sketch in a background of biological knowledge against which human sexual life may be seen in proper perspective, and to provide the audience with the minimum technical vocabulary necessary to enable them to discuss sex without the use of gutter-language.

I'm very glad to have the opportunity of coming here for



## Specimen Lectures

these three evenings and discussing this whole question of sex with you. It's obviously an important thing to discuss, for in the lives of most people sex plays an important part. Of course, it's not the only thing in life, as some novels and films seem to suggest. Many men (and women too) go all through their lives without ever having any physical sexual relations, and yet they live very full and happy and useful lives. Nevertheless, sex is an important thing, and it's a good sign when young people get together to clear up their ideas on the matter, as you're doing here to-night.

As you will have seen in the announcement of the meetings, we are joining to-night, men and women together, because we want to make a general introduction to the whole question of sex, and that concerns us all equally. And so that none of you will be disappointed and feel that I'm a long time in coming down to brass tacks, let me say immediately that to-night I'm not going to deal very much with sex in humans, but rather more with other creatures. I know that you haven't come here especially to hear about the frog and the rabbit and so on. Obviously that is not what you're mainly interested in — although it is in fact very interesting. It is naturally ourselves, humans, that we most want to know about. Yet in this first meeting I propose to deal mainly with a few of the simpler animals. It's really exactly like a series of meetings on any other subject. For example, if we had three meetings on the internal combustion engine, you wouldn't expect the speaker on the first occasion to go into elaborate details about super-charging. He would have to start by describing a simple two-stroke, or something of that sort, and gradually work up to the more complicated types. Just the same applies here. We must work up gradually to ourselves, the most advanced sort of mammal.

Then next week we'll go on to deal in much more detail with reproduction in humans, which I shall only just touch on to-night. Males and females are meeting separately for that lecture. That doesn't mean that there's anything very different dealt with at the two meetings. Men and women want to know the same facts about both sexes. But when one is dealing with sex in humans, although both men and women require to know and discuss much the same things, there are some matters of particular interest to women and others of particular interest to



## Sex Education

men. And if we separate for this second meeting we shall get ahead rather more quickly.

Having dealt with the parts of the subject that are of special interest to the two separate sexes, we are coming back together again for the final lecture, to deal with other problems, such as that of the relations between the sexes, which are of interest to both men and women equally.

I'm not setting out to-night to give you a formal biology lesson. But I think that it will be useful to deal at this first meeting with the whole question of the relation between sex and reproduction in plants and animals. Often people, even those who imagine they know everything on this topic, find that in fact their ideas about sex and reproduction have been very muddled, and it's worth while having a look to see just exactly what the connection between sex and reproduction is. Many people may have even thought that there's not much difference between the two words. Indeed, one often meets with the idea that sex and reproduction are more or less the same thing ; that the only value in sex is as a means to reproduction, and that reproduction only takes place by means of sex. But the fact is — as many of you will know from your biology lessons at school — that large numbers of animals (and plants too, for that matter) reproduce without there being any question of sex at all, without the joining of male and female cells.

Some of you will be familiar with the little creature called *Amoeba*. I see smiles on one or two of your faces — you're probably tired of hearing about *Amoeba* — but the reason why this little creature is so often mentioned is that it is extremely interesting in its method of reproduction. *Amoeba* is a tiny little jelly-like thing which continually changes its shape. It is probably the simplest animal of all — this little blob of jelly, about the size of a small speck of dust, which can be found in pond water.

I shall not attempt to describe it in any detail, but in the film which we are having later on there are some very good photographs of it, and you'll be able to see then that when it reproduces it merely splits in two. The body becomes constricted in the middle, and finally it splits completely. There you have a perfectly efficient method of reproduction, with no question of sex involved — no question of male or female animals, no question of father and mother. All you can say is that the parent *Amoeba*



## Specimen Lectures

becomes two offspring — and the parent disappears in the process !

If you try to imagine this on a human level, it is almost as if, while I had been talking, a furrow had appeared down the middle of my body, as if it had got deeper and deeper, until finally my body had split completely in two. And then there'd have been two lectures going on ! That's the sort of reproduction you get in *Amoeba* — no question of sex involved at all. This is known as ' non-sexual ' or *asexual* reproduction.

When you get to slightly more complex animals you find that there are male and female sex organs concerned in reproduction. If you were to collect some pondweed and examine it by a lens, you might find a little creature known as *Hydra*, about  $\frac{1}{4}$  to  $\frac{3}{4}$  inch in length. It has a rather tube-like body with a food opening surrounded by tentacles. It looks at first sight rather like a tiny little octopus — although it isn't really related to the octopus at all.

*Hydra* is interesting, for sometimes it reproduces without any sex as *Amoeba* does, but it also reproduces sexually by the co-operation of two parents. These two methods of reproduction take place at different seasons of the year.

If you go round with a jam-jar and collect *Hydra* from the local pond in the spring, you'll find that the creatures at that season of the year grow on their side a bud which gets larger and larger. A food opening develops and tentacles grow, until there is a miniature *Hydra* growing on the parent's side. Then one day the tentacles attach themselves to a pondweed, the muscular cells contract, the bud breaks away from the parent — and there you have two individuals instead of one.

Again, to bring our analogy up to human level, let us imagine one of *us* reproducing asexually in this way. This time it would not be a question of splitting straight down from head to foot. Just imagine Jones walking down the street. Not Mr. Jones or Mrs. Jones, no question of being male or female, but just Jones — of no particular sex. A bud forms on the side of the body, it grows larger and larger, a head forms and arms grow out and so on. The arms couldn't very well attach themselves to pondweed, since we don't live in ponds. I suppose what you would have to imagine is that the arms grab hold of a lamp-post as Jones passes by. There's a great heaving, a final tug, and there's



## Sex Education

baby Jones walking by your side ! That seems rather an absurd comparison, but it is in fact quite an accurate one — and it's the type of thing that happens in *Hydra*.

But if you left your collecting until the autumn, you'd find a different state of affairs. These animals which, during the spring, have no particular sex — quite neutral, no sex at all — as the season goes on become either male or female. On the side of the female *Hydra*, swellings grow and in them there develop the egg cells. The scientific word for egg is *ovum* — that's easy enough to remember when you think of the word 'oval', meaning 'like an egg'. And the place where eggs or *ova* are made is called the *ovary*. So you have these swellings, ovaries, on the side of the female *Hydra*, with the eggs or ova inside them. That's all there is to the female sex organs of this simple animal.

In the case of the male there are several smaller swellings, and instead of producing eggs, they make male sex cells. The male sex cells are called *spermatozoa*, but this is such a long word that we usually abbreviate it to *sperm*. You will remember that the place in which the ova are made is called the ovary. And no doubt if you were to make up a name for the place where the sperm are made you'd say 'spermary'. Well, if we lived in America we might use that simple and obvious word 'spermary', but most people in England use a different word for the place where the sperm are made. It is known as the *testis* or the *testicle*. Generally speaking, the biologist uses the word 'testis' and medical people use 'testicle'. I shall use the word 'testis'. The film uses 'testicle'. It doesn't matter which one you choose, but it's as well to know them both.

You will in the course of this week's film see enlarged photographs and diagrams of sperm and you'll see that they're for all the world like tiny tadpoles. They leave the male swellings, the testes, swim their way through the water towards the egg, and then one joins with it and fertilises it. When the male sex cell joins with the female, when the sperm fertilises the ovum, it makes it fruitful and then it will grow into a new individual.

Normally speaking, an egg will not develop without being fertilised — without a sperm joining with it. But sometimes it will. There are some animals in which the egg normally develops without being fertilised. For example, the honey bee, in which



## Specimen Lectures

if the eggs are fertilised they develop into worker bees or queen bees, while if they are not fertilised they develop into drones. And much the same sort of thing — *parthenogenesis* or ' virgin birth ' it is called — takes place in other insects such as those greenfly that worry gardeners so much.

Some rather interesting experiments have been done upon other animals — animals in which it is usually necessary for the sperm and the egg to join together. It has been possible in some cases to make the eggs from the ovary grow without their being fertilised. Some of you will have heard of experiments on frogs' eggs (the ordinary frog spawn which develops into tadpoles and then into frogs). It is possible by heat treatment or by chemical treatment or by other methods to make the eggs develop without their having been fertilised, and they develop into perfectly healthy and apparently normal frogs.

But much more interesting is something that has been done recently in America. A very well-known biologist has actually produced rabbits from unfertilised eggs. He has skilfully managed to get the eggs to develop into perfectly normal young rabbits without there being any mating — and he has done that for two generations. So there you have a bunch of bunnies that never had a granddad ! That seems very, very sad, doesn't it ? But its very interesting.

Now let's look again at the common frog. I don't need to say much about it, for it's an animal well known to everybody.

If you keep your eyes open and your ears open in the country in the spring, you'll see the frogs mating and you'll hear their courtship. Some of you bright young sparks who think you know all about these things may be rather surprised to hear of courtship in anything quite so lowly as frogs. But when a frog he would a-wooing go, you'll hear the male croaking away — and it seems to have much the same effect on the female frog as a male crooner has on many girls. The first stage of the courtship is a sort of vocal introduction. Later on, they both go into the shallow water and you can see them, sometimes in their scores and occasionally even in their hundreds, the male frogs clambering on the females' backs. A pair remain together for some time and the eggs pass out from the female frog and the sperm pass out from the male frog. The sperm swim through the water towards the eggs and fertilise them. Probably when you were younger



## Sex Education

you got into trouble for keeping dripping jam-jars of frog spawn on the kitchen table, so you all know how the eggs develop into tadpoles and eventually into frogs.

The frog is a quite complicated animal and the eggs are produced in two large ovaries, right deep inside the body of the female. From them pass two *egg tubes* which lower down join together into one tube, and the eggs leave the body by an opening between the legs. Inside the body of the male are two testes, where the sperm are produced. The two *sperm tubes* from the testes also join together, and by an opening between the legs the sperm pass out into the water. So there are the sperm and the eggs being passed into the water fairly close together and obviously there is a pretty good chance of fertilisation.

But when you come to animals living on dry land or flying in the air there is a complication. You cannot merely have the sperm and eggs passing out into the water, because the animals don't live in water. And there's an extra complication in the case of birds, because of the hard shell around the egg. In the proper scientific use of the word, the egg or ovum consists only of the yellow yolk, not the white and the shell. As the ovum passes down the egg tube, from the lining of the tube the white is produced, and as the egg passes further down the shell is formed around it. Now how on earth is the sperm going to meet the ovum — the yolk, that is — deep inside the white and the shell? The shell may not seem to be particularly strong when you drop a dozen eggs, but to the sperm it is an impassable barrier. There is no possibility of the sperm getting through the shell — and so it must join with the yolk before the shell is put round it.

By some means the sperm has to reach the ovum well up in the egg tube, while it is still unprotected by the shell. The way this is carried out is already well enough known to most of you. Either you or your neighbours will have kept domestic fowl. You will have noticed that occasionally the male and female birds mate, the cock mounting on the back of the hen. Often younger children seem to think they're fighting, but actually they're mating. The male's sperm tube and the female's egg tube are placed with their openings close together, and some of the sperm passes into the egg tube.

The sperm are contained in a milky liquid known as *semen*. This liquid passes out of the opening from the male bird into the



## Specimen Lectures

opening of the female. I mentioned earlier that the sperm can swim, and they swim up the egg tube. All the openings of our body — the mouth, the nostrils and so on — contain a certain amount of moisture in them, and the small amount of moisture in the egg tube is sufficient for the sperm. They swim up, and if they happen to fertilise the yolk, then that egg may produce a chicken. Naturally, if the eggs are not fertilised, there will be no chicks.

Now let us, just for a moment, look at this question of the transfer of the semen, purely as a problem in mechanics. Obviously sex and reproduction are more than a mere matter of mechanics, but let us see what the mechanical problem is. There is one tube (the sperm tube of the male) from which a liquid (the semen) is to be passed into another tube (the female's egg tube). And the way in which that is done in most birds is for the openings of the two tubes to be placed somewhere close together. The problem is much the same as that of a fire brigade, which has to pass a liquid (water) from one tube to another. But what would you think of a fire brigade which just placed the hoses along the ground with their openings *somewhere near* each other? A certain amount of the water might trickle through, but most of it would be lost. If that were the fire brigade's method, half the towns of England would have been burned down long ago! Obviously the efficient method of passing liquid is precisely the method that fire brigades use. That is, the end of the tube from which the liquid is coming is rather narrower, and the end of the tube into which the liquid is going is rather wider, and the narrower tube is placed inside the wider tube. That is the method used. And the most highly developed animals, including the mammals, the group to which we belong, have developed this efficient method of transfer of semen. The end of the male sperm tube is actually placed inside the opening of the female egg tube.

Mammals have the same general layout as we've already seen in frogs and in birds, but of course there are complications. In mammals, the group to which humans belong, the animals which feed their offspring by milk, the young in nearly all cases grow inside their mother's body. Most of you will know that in humans the child usually takes about nine months to develop before it is sufficiently grown to be able to come and live in this



## Sex Education

hard world of ours. Some of you may know from keeping pets that rabbits usually take round about thirty days and cats and dogs sixty-three days. I don't suppose many of you keep pet elephants, but if you did you would find out that the period during which the young grows in the mother's body is rather under two years.

Thus the mother mammal, in addition to producing eggs, has also this extremely important job of nourishing the developing baby (the *embryo*) growing in a special part of the egg tube. This special part of the egg tube (the womb or *uterus*, as it is called) has thick muscular walls. The opening in which the male organ is actually placed has also a special name — the *vagina*.

In the male the sperm leave the testes and then pass out in the semen from the body through the outer male sex organ — the *penis*. By a peculiar sort of economy of Nature, the penis, as well as being the channel for the semen, is also the channel for the urine, the waste water from the body ; and there is an arrangement which ensures that *either* the semen *or* the urine can pass out, but not both at the same time.

Now the sperm are very, very tiny — much tinier than eggs. Very delicate and very easily damaged. In the case of frogs and other cold-blooded animals, the sperm can develop inside the body, but in the case of the mammal the body is hot-blooded, and the sperm might be damaged by the heat. And so you find in mammals that the testes are not right inside the body as they are in the frog. They descend quite early on in life, usually before birth, into a little bag of flesh called the *scrotum* between the legs ; and thus the male's testes, unlike the female's ovaries, are outside the trunk of the body.

Well now, with regard to humans I have laid a general foundation. The next meeting will go on where I've left off, dealing in more detail with the actual structure of the sex organs and the mechanism of sex in humans, and with those particular points which are of special interest to the young men and young women respectively. And the week after we are coming together again for a final talk and discussion.

Now, I think I had better come to an end, and we can see the film, and then I hope there may be some questions and discussion.



# Specimen Lectures

## LECTURE B<sub>I</sub>

This forms the second of the series and was delivered to young men only, being illustrated by the film 'Human Reproduction'. The corresponding talk to young women was very similar, except in those respects indicated on page 254. For a mixed audience a median approach is needed.

Those who were present last week will remember that it was only towards the end of the meeting that I began to deal with sex and reproduction in humans. I spent most of the time describing other animals — some of them very simple little creatures that you can see only with a microscope. And I pointed out then that it isn't all animals that reproduce sexually, it isn't all animals which have male and female individuals co-operating in the production of the new generation. I worked up gradually through the different types of creature, until finally we came to the group of animals that we belong to — the mammals, the type of animal that feeds its young by milk. And I think I dealt just towards the end of the meeting with the structure of the sex organs in mammals, and what I described then applies with small variations in *all* mammals — lions, tigers, cats, dogs, sheep, humans, rabbits, elephants, whales and so on.

In the female there are the two main sex organs right inside the body, the two *ovaries* that make the female sex cells (the eggs or *ova*), and leading from them are two egg tubes which then join together and open to the outside of the female's body between the legs. That, you will remember, was the outline of the sex organs in the female.

But there are one or two complications. I mentioned that the opening to the female tube, the part in which the male sex cells are deposited, has a special name — the *vagina*. And I also described how part of the egg tube is built up in a very special way. This part (called the 'womb' or *uterus*) is shaped rather like a pear, about three inches long and two inches wide, with the narrow end opening into the vagina. It has thick, muscular walls with a delicate lining in which it is possible for the fertilised egg, growing as an embryo, to live during the period until it is born (in the case of humans roughly nine months). Mind you — one can't stick quite rigidly to that figure of nine months. We are all slightly different from each other, and sometimes babies are ready to be born in rather less time and sometimes they



## Sex Education

require rather more, but nine months is a fairly average figure.

While the embryo is developing inside the womb it obtains food from the mother's blood. People seem sometimes to imagine that the mother's blood actually passes into the child's body, but this is not the case. Not a single drop of the mother's blood ever enters the developing embryo. The young baby manufactures its own blood and doesn't obtain any from the mother. What happens is that in the wall of the womb the child's blood vessels and the mother's blood vessels are very closely intermingled, and the foodstuffs which are contained in the mother's blood seep out across the walls of her blood vessels and then seep in through the walls of the baby's blood vessels.

Much the same thing takes place so far as oxygen is concerned. The mother doesn't only eat for the developing child (the embryo) — she also breathes for it. It is deep inside her body and cannot possibly breathe, but it needs oxygen just the same. The mother breathes, and the oxygen is carried in her blood and passes across to the blood of the developing child.

But as well as passing things *to* the growing embryo, the mother's blood stream also takes things *from* it. It is not only *after* we are born that our bodies produce waste materials — they are also produced *before* we are born. But the unborn baby can't get rid of them in the usual way. What happens is that as the food and oxygen pass in the one direction into the child's blood from the mother's blood, the waste materials that the baby is making pass in the other direction from baby to mother — a sort of two-way traffic along the navel or *umbilical cord* that connects the growing baby with the wall of the womb.

At the end of nine months, the womb, which has increased enormously in size with the growth of the embryo, begins a series of contractions. Eventually, these force the baby through the opening of the womb, down the vagina and out into the world.

After the child is born, it is at first still attached to the mother by the navel cord; and the cord has to be carefully tied in two places to prevent bleeding, and then the cord is cut between the two constrictions. After a little while the place heals up, but it always leaves a certain mark. I don't know what you call it here, but in Lancashire we call it the 'belly button'.

The human egg is very small — about one-hundredth of an inch across. But the *sperm* (the male sex cell) is considerably smaller



## Specimen Lectures

than that again, and you would need an enormous number of sperm to take up the same volume as that minute little egg. You might be able to see the egg with the unaided eye if you had fairly good eyesight, but no one could possibly see a sperm without a powerful microscope.

I want to try to give you some idea of just how tiny these sperm are. You know that they are made in the *testes* and pass out from the man's body in a milky sort of liquid known as *semen*. Now during a single act of intercourse, as a rough average there may be somewhere round about 200 million sperm passed. Perhaps that will indicate how small they are. One of them may fertilise an egg — all the others just disintegrate and are useless. No wonder people talk about the prodigality of life!

We all, each one of us, start from one of these tiny eggs and one of these still tinier sperm. But it isn't very long before we grow pretty rapidly. Within three months or so the egg has developed to quite a fair size, round about three inches in length, with arms and legs and so on, and even the nails are beginning to appear. Then gradually during the remaining six months we grow larger and larger with the nourishment we obtain from our mother's blood, until we are ready to be born.

It's obvious from what I've said how much each one of us owes to our mother. Both before birth and after birth she fed us. For us she put up with discomfort and with pain, and even with danger. It's the women who have all the difficulties and run all the risks where sex is concerned, and it's up to us men to recognise that and do all we can to help them and to be specially considerate towards them.

So far I've concentrated entirely upon the fully-developed sex organs of the adult, but I think that perhaps even more interesting is the story of *how* they develop. In the child the sex organs are there in outline, but they are not working fully. It is during adolescence, that period of a few years between about 14 to 18 in boys and between about 12 to 16 in girls (those figures are not exact) that the sex organs become matured and properly developed, and we change from children to adults. And it's very interesting to see just what causes that change to come about.

To understand the story of what happens during adolescence I must refer to something which at first sight appears to have nothing to do with sex at all — namely, to the various glands we



## Sex Education

have in our body. You all know of the sweat glands, the tear glands, the saliva glands and so on. That is one sort of gland — glands that have tubes or *ducts* leading from them, ducts along which the chemicals made by the glands pass out.

But we also have in our bodies another quite different type of gland, glands that make chemicals but have no passages or ducts leading from them. They are called *ductless* glands, and it is these ductless glands that I want to talk about now. They are particularly important, for the chemicals they make are extremely powerful ones. The name given to these chemicals is *hormones*. These hormones dissolve out from the glands into the blood stream and are carried all over the body, reaching every living cell.

One of these ductless glands is the *pancreas*. It produces a substance called *insulin*, and most of you probably know that people who lack insulin suffer from a sort of diabetes and have to be given special injections. Another of them is the *thyroid* gland in the neck, and in some people it swells a great deal and you get a type of goitre produced. If the thyroid is not working properly the person tends to be slow and sluggish ; and if, as occasionally happens, a child is born with no thyroid, or if the thyroid doesn't work at all, that child never really grows up either physically or mentally. It remains as an idiot, a cretin. Some people's thyroid works *too* powerfully and they tend to be very quick and excitable and to have protruding eyes.

You might think that this does not appear to have a great deal to do with sex, but I will explain now why I have been talking about these glands. The ovaries in the female and the testes in the male are also ductless glands. I have been speaking so far in these two talks about the ovaries and the testes as sex organs, and so they are — they produce the sex cells. But what has been discovered comparatively recently is their other quite distinct job of producing these chemicals, these hormones, that dissolve in the blood and pass all round the body. And in the film we're going to see, the diagrams will show which parts produce the sex cells and which produce the hormones.

Now the testes and the ovaries are not very active early in our life. It is round about the age of 12 in girls and round about 14 in boys that they begin producing large amounts of these chemicals, and together with the hormones from other glands, they pass round the body and make us begin to change from boys



## Specimen Lectures

into men and from girls into women.

In some parts of the body the hormones don't seem to have any appreciable effect, but in other parts they do. For example, in boys, they obviously influence the skin. In certain parts of the body — on the face, round the sex organs, under the arms, on the chest and so on — when these hormones come round in the blood, they make the skin active and stimulate it to grow hairs. So the result is that one fine day young Johnny goes into the bathroom, pinches father's razor and has his first shave. And he thinks it's a fine idea — although he generally changes his mind as the years go by. But it's interesting to notice that usually when we have our first shave most of us *do* feel rather proud of it, because we feel that we are growing into men. And although Pa may pull your leg, you are right and Pa is wrong, for it *is* in fact a very definite sign that you are growing into men, one of the most obvious signs.

The hormones influence other parts of the body too. Take for example the muscles of the throat, the parts (the vocal cords) that produce the sounds by which we speak. When these hormones come round in the blood they make the vocal cords grow looser and heavier. You know what happens if you have a violin with light and tight strings and you take them off and substitute loose and heavy strings. You get a deep bass note instead of a high-pitched one — and just the same happens with the vocal cords. When you change in that way the voice breaks. Of course, you don't go to bed one evening with a beautiful clear treble voice and the next morning wake up with a nice deep bass one. There is generally a period during which you can't quite rely on your voice. You start speaking in a deep bass, in the middle of the sentence it changes into a high-pitched squeak, and then it goes down again. It's occasionally rather embarrassing, but we just have to put up with it.

I've been speaking so far about the changes in boys. Now what about girls? Well — usually the skin does not develop hair to anything like the same extent. Hair does grow round the sex organs and under the arms, but not generally on the face or the chest. Usually in girls the change is not so much in the skin itself as in the flesh deeper down, and you find that, particularly under the breasts and round the hips, the body begins to store up a good deal of fatty material. The result is that the figure



## Sex Education

develops, and the girl who at the age of 11 is more or less straight-up-and-down, by the age of 15 has developed rather more interesting curves.

Now why *should* they be interesting? If we had had here a group of boys of 10 years of age they wouldn't have thought that the least bit funny. But the very fact that during adolescence we begin to become interested in the other sex, is itself partly the result of these same chemicals. It is not only our bodies that change during adolescence, it is also our whole outlook on life — partly as the result of education and partly as a result of increased independence when we leave school and go to work, but partly as a result of the production of these hormones. The girl of 11 often feels that boys are nothing but a nuisance, and the boy of 11 cannot understand why girls exist on the face of the earth at all. Yet a few years later both of them have changed their minds, and think that perhaps there really is something to be said for the other sex after all. And that change of attitude is largely due to the action of these sex hormones. Don't let me shatter your sweet dreams — I shouldn't like you to think that love is merely a matter of chemistry. It's not just a test-tube affair. But we must recognise the fact that, to a certain extent at any rate, these chemicals are responsible for the interest that boys develop in girls and girls develop in boys. It's a normal, natural development of adolescence.

Now let us have a look at one or two of the other changes that take place. An egg in the case of humans may be set free from an ovary round about every 28 days, sometimes from the right ovary and sometimes from the left. That means to say that every 28 days there is the possibility that an egg might be fertilised. If by any chance it *is* fertilised, it needs food — and it can only get the food from the blood supply in the wall of the womb. And in humans there is a very efficient method by which, every time there is any chance of the blood supply being needed (that is, about every 28 days), it is built up in the wall of the womb. But if the egg is not fertilised, the blood supply in the wall of the womb is of no use. The lining breaks down and blood and other tissues flow out during the next few days.

This flow of blood from the female body takes place periodically at any age from about 12 years onwards. It's usually called the 'monthly period', but the scientific term is *menstruation*.



## Specimen Lectures

I have described it in some detail, because people have very muddled ideas about it. Very often people, both men and women, seem to think that there is something rather queer about it. But when you see the way it works, it's really about the most natural thing you can possibly imagine.

Now let us have another look at what happens in boys. I mentioned that girls, after the onset of puberty, begin producing eggs, and something rather similar happens in adolescent boys. At any time from round about 14, the testes may begin to produce sperm by the million. What happens? Just what you would expect to happen. Every so often there is an overflow of the semen. It often passes out during the night, and that's why it is called a 'night loss'. Another name for it is *seminal emission*. Very often when this takes place one has rather vivid dreams, and so lads sometimes refer to this night loss as a 'wet dream'. It's rather an unpleasant phrase, but I want to be quite sure you know what I'm talking about.

I mention this matter of night losses only in order to make it clear that it's hardly worth mentioning. I know that sounds Irish, but it's very true. For so often young lads get worried when this happens, and seem to think there's something wrong. It's not a sign of anything wrong, it's a sign of something right. It's a sign that the sex organs are developing normally, as they should do in any healthy young lad. So if any of you happen to have friends who are rather worried about it, I hope you will be able to put them right and explain that there is nothing to worry about at all.

There's another matter I must mention. Very often during adolescence young people find out, perhaps by accident in the first place, that by handling their sex organs they get pleasant sensations, and in the case of boys this handling of the sex organs may bring about the passing of the semen. This habit is often called 'self abuse', but the proper name for it is *masturbation*.

There has been more nonsense written and spoken about masturbation than about almost anything else I know of. Scare stories that are quite untrue are still being spread around, and young people are told that it will eventually lead to their getting venereal disease, or that it will bring about insanity, or that they are straight on the slippery slope to Hades. These stories are sheer and utter nonsense. Some folk like to convey these



## Sex Education

harrowing warnings so as to scare people into what they call 'goodness', but we are here at these meetings to get the truth, and the truth is that within normal limits masturbation doesn't do the body any harm. I say 'within normal limits', because *anything* to excess will do harm.

The fact is that the majority of young men at some time or other get into this habit of masturbation, but most of us grow out of it as we get older. One cannot give exact figures, but one investigator summed up his impressions by saying: "Of those men questioned, 95 per cent admitted to having masturbated at some time or another. The other 5 per cent didn't own up" — and I don't think that's very far from the truth.

Now please do not misunderstand me when I say that masturbation doesn't usually do the body any harm. Don't go away with the idea that I'm saying that masturbation is a good thing. I'm not. I think that it's a thing one should try to avoid. But my objection has nothing to do with the body, it has to do with the emotions.

Most people look forward at some time or other to a happy marriage. Some of you may think that that's a rather funny idea, and many young lads feel quite convinced that *they* are not going to get married. But later on they change their minds, and whether you think it or not, most of you will one day be meeting some nice young girl, and you'll be setting up home together. Now if a marriage is going to be successful, one of the most important things is that the two partners should be in love with each other.

And the essence of being in love with a person is that your affections, your thoughts and your feelings are directed *outwards* to them, not inwards to yourself. It is *their* happiness that you are thinking of — you're not selfishly thinking of your own feelings. That is the trouble with masturbation. If for a period of years you get into the habit of selfish enjoyment — that's what it comes to, simply enjoyment in which you're thinking of yourself and thinking of your own sex feelings all the time — you cannot suddenly on your wedding eve turn your emotions inside out like the fingers of a glove and direct them out to your partner. Our emotions are not as simple as all that — you can't just turn them inside out. That I think is the real argument against



## Specimen Lectures

masturbation. Not that it does any great harm to the body, but that it might make it rather more difficult for a successful and happy marriage to take place later on.

What, then, can we do to throw off the habit? Well, apart from the general question of mental discipline, there are sometimes quite simple little things that will help. Anything which draws our attention to the sex organs makes masturbation rather more likely. And so it may help to empty the bladder and bowels regularly before going to bed at night, so that their pressure when overfull does not cause sensations that make masturbation more probable. Trousers should not be too tight, underclothes and bedclothes should not be too heavy or too warm. It is well, too, not to lie abed in the morning, for that is a time when masturbation is particularly likely.

These are all purely physical matters, but there are mental aspects too. Take the question of nude photographs, for example. I don't think that I'm a particularly narrow-minded person, and I say quite frankly that there are nudes — photographs and paintings and sculpture — that I enjoy contemplating. There's nothing wrong with them — indeed, to take delight in the beautiful human body is surely an excellent thing. But they may arouse sexual feelings, and it's as well for a person who is troubled by masturbation to avoid anything, even if there's nothing essentially wrong with it, that is sexually exciting, that tends to make self-control more difficult.

But one isn't going to do any good by worrying. The sort of attitude to take on the matter is not that it's a wicked or harmful thing, but a rather self-centred and juvenile thing. One ought to grow out of it. After all, there's nothing very wicked about sucking your thumb, but you don't expect to see a 15-year-old boy walking down the street doing it. It is not wicked or dreadfully harmful, but it's immature. And so is masturbation. A person who has some pride in himself wouldn't want to do it. The thing to do, therefore, is to try to throw off the habit, to feel that it's a rather childish and selfish sort of thing to do and a habit that you're going to get rid of — but not to worry yourself to death about it as people sometimes do.

Well now, we've heard a good deal to-night about the sex organs and how they work, and particularly how they develop during adolescence. Next week I shall be going on to deal not



## Sex Education

so much with the individual as with society as a whole, about the way in which we should behave, and the way in which complications in our sexual relations are introduced when we live together as a community. But I think that is all I shall say to-night, because we shall be having the film, and I am most anxious to leave plenty of time for question and discussion, so I will leave it at that.

### LECTURE B<sub>2</sub>

Here are given notes<sup>1</sup> on those sections of a lecture to young women only which differ somewhat in approach from B<sub>1</sub>, the parallel talk to young men.

1. While factual knowledge of the same kind should be given, the emphasis will be somewhat different. (*E.g.* the effects of hormones formed in the ovaries will be more fully described and a fuller explanation given of the characteristic emotional changes of adolescent girlhood, but much less attention paid to masturbation).

2. The hygiene of menstruation (using the phrase 'monthly period' or explaining the word 'menstruation') should be dealt with somewhat as follows :

" Let us think for a few minutes about the best way to live at this time. First, as I have already explained, menstruation is in no way an illness. Indeed, it is a sign of healthy, normal development, showing that the girl is growing up and approaching the day when she will be able to exercise her full functions as wife and mother. Certain hygienic measures should be taken as a matter of course, and then as far as possible one should forget the occurrence and lead one's ordinary normal life.

Now let us look at some points of detail. On no account should the pad one uses for protection be fastened too tightly : if one uses a belt it should not be too tight, and this applies even more if a piece of tape or elastic is used. The pad should be changed sufficiently often for it not to become hard and chafing—the best form is the one that can be burned or is soluble.

On the whole, medical opinion is against the use of internal pads or tampons for unmarried girls, convenient though they

<sup>1</sup> Based on information supplied by Miss Violet D. Swaisland and Dr. I. Powell Heath.



## Specimen Lectures

are in some ways. They are often difficult to insert, as the vagina is rather small, and some damage may be done. It also needs some care to get them into just the right place, and if they are pushed up against the opening of the uterus, they may interfere with the normal flow. There is, moreover, always the chance of introducing germs into the vagina from the hands, and these may cause infection and set up inflammation. Then there is the fact that being 'out of sight', they may be 'out of mind', and not be changed as often as they should be. Then cases have been known where the girl has been unable to get the tampon out again, and even if she goes to the doctor to have it removed (as she certainly should do), it is a great inconvenience. If she is foolish enough not to go to a doctor, but leaves it in, she is due for serious trouble. And on top of all this, it is often necessary to wear an external towel as well when the period is at its height. So my advice to you is not to use tampons, but to wait until you are in your twenties and perhaps married, and then you can think over all the pros and cons and decide for yourselves.

It is wise to guard against irritation and chafing, particularly towards the end of the period, by the use of a little talcum powder or of some bland substance such as lanoline, glycerine jelly, etc.

It is very important to wash the parts of the body affected, and the best plan is to use warm water and a little soap both morning and evening. If you can have a bath regularly, then continue that just as usual. You will feel more comfortable if you do this.

Now for the question of exercise. Exercise helps the blood to flow freely, and the better the blood circulates the more easily will the menstrual flow leave the body. Try, therefore, to take exercise as usual. Don't miss your keep-fit class or your evening walk — you may even ask your keep-fit teacher to suggest some exercises that are specially good at these times. Exercise will also help to ensure a regular daily action of the bowels and it is specially important that you should not be constipated just before or during your period.

One is often asked about pains and headaches during the period. Sometimes these are due simply to congestion, and can quickly be remedied by taking proper exercise, attending to the bowels regularly, and keeping in good general bodily con-



19  
1-1955  
17

## Sex Education

dition. But in some cases really severe pains are due to an abnormal kink at the lower end of the uterus, and if you suffer from them you should certainly consult a doctor and insist on an effort being made to find out their cause. Often glandular treatment will put things right. No woman should allow herself to be disabled by pain at these times without doing her very best to secure a remedy.

Although it is usual for the periods to begin at round about twelve years of age, they may start a couple of years earlier or up to about five years later. So there is no need to get worried if you happen to be one of the late starters.

Finally, what about irregularities in the periods? As you know, the periods tend to come about every twenty-eight days; but each individual may have a slightly different interval, and during the first few years particularly a girl may notice considerable irregularity. Unless she feels ill and out of sorts she need not worry about this."

3. It is important to explain about the menopause or 'change of life' — a normal process which is the reverse of the onset of menstruation, and should not cause ill-health. If headaches, etc., become troublesome, a doctor's advice should be sought, and he will often be able to clear up the trouble by means of glandular treatment. It should also be made clear that the menopause does not mean the end of the woman's sexual life.

4. The development and birth of the child may be described in rather more detail — particularly the importance of medical care throughout pregnancy, of the right kind of diet and of a serene and joyous attitude of mind. It should be explained that memory of labour pains fades quickly once birth is accomplished, and that pregnancy and breast feeding often bring with them both physical and emotional satisfaction. The possibility of alleviating pain by drugs should be emphasised, so that when the members of the audience themselves come to have babies they will know that analgesia is possible, and will demand it. Throughout it is important to be frank about the fact that birth involves pain, but reassuring as to its severity; and girls should be left with the impression that both doctors and midwives are prepared to give the woman in labour the most skilled and considerate help.



# Specimen Lectures

## LECTURE C

This is the third of the series and was delivered to a mixed audience. Its aim was largely to provoke questions and discussion about social and behaviour problems.

This is the last meeting of the series and in a way I think it's by far the most important. So far we have to some extent been discussing humans as animals — as animals rather like the rabbit or the pig or the elephant. Of course, that is a perfectly right and proper thing to do, because we *are* animals — animals very similar to other mammals in many ways. But in some ways we're a quite unique type of animal, quite different from any other.

In the first place, we're *intelligent* animals. That is one distinction. And another particularly important difference is the fact that we're very *social* animals, living together in large societies. And the fact that we live together in society and not in isolated couples on desert islands, introduces all sorts of complications into our sexual behaviour.

Perhaps the most obvious difficulty that arises when people live together in large societies is the fact that infectious diseases are liable to spread from one person to another. That applies to all communicable diseases, but, as you will have guessed, the particular ones that I'm referring to at the moment are the venereal diseases, the diseases that attack the reproductive organs. Notice that I say venereal *diseases*, not venereal *disease*, because there is more than one of them. Venereal diseases are simply those diseases which happen to attack the sex organs; and it's pretty obvious, when you come to think of it, that the word 'venereal' comes from Venus — the goddess of love. People often ask "Will venereal disease do this?", "Will venereal disease do that?" — as if it were a case of just one disease. But these questions are just as absurd as if you were to ask "Will throat disease do this?" or "Will leg disease do that?" It all depends on which particular type of throat disease or which particular type of leg disease you are talking about. There are different venereal diseases and we shall have to consider them quite separately when we are discussing their causes, their effects and their cure.

There are three venereal diseases that exist in this island to any extent, but only two of them are very important; and there



## Sex Education

has been so much propaganda in connection with them recently that there is no need for me to go into very great detail. But if there is anything I don't make clear you can ask me questions later.

Now let us have a look at these three venereal diseases. Let's take the question of names first of all. The two venereal diseases that are common in this country are, as you know, syphilis and gonorrhoea — these are the medical terms for them. But the everyday word for syphilis is 'pox' and that for gonorrhoea is 'clap'. There is a third disease, soft chancre, but it is not nearly so important.

Both syphilis and gonorrhoea are caused by perfectly definite living germs, and there is no other way of getting the diseases except by becoming infected with these germs. People seem sometimes to have the most extraordinary ideas about the ways in which a venereal disease may be caught. Since, however, venereal diseases are due to these living germs, and since the germs affect the reproductive organs, the diseases spread from one person to another during sexual intercourse, when the parts of the body concerned come into close contact.

That, then, is the method of infection in virtually all cases. It is true that it is *just* possible for infection to take place in other ways. For example, cases do crop up now and then where people get a venereal infection on the lips, through kissing an infected person. But it's really very, very rare and hardly worth worrying about. The risk of infection except through sexual intercourse is very small. It is a good deal less than the risk that you will get run over by a motor car. So it's not really worth bothering about.

This means that people can more or less decide for themselves whether or not they're going to run the risk of becoming infected — and you can't say that about many diseases. You can't be at all certain that in the bus you will not sit on the next seat to a person suffering from influenza. You can't entirely by your own effort ensure that you are not going to become infected with the common cold or with tuberculosis; but where venereal diseases are concerned you can. If people make certain that they have no sexual relations with anyone already infected, then they can't catch either syphilis or gonorrhoea. Usually that will mean having sexual relations only with a person such as your husband or your wife, whom you will have known for a long time



## Specimen Lectures

— for a period of years — and whose state of health will therefore be fairly familiar to you.

Now what about the effects of these diseases ? Well, if I were to go into great detail, I think I might turn some of your tummies over, for the results may really be horrible beyond exaggeration. But I'm just going to give a very brief description and leave it for questions if any of you want more details.

In the case of syphilis, usually what happens is that a little while after infection takes place (perhaps a fortnight or a month later) an ulcer forms on the part that is affected — that is, usually, on the sex organs. And then, unfortunately, it tends to disappear. Now let me explain why I say 'unfortunately'. This ulcer isn't a painful one, and usually it disappears after a little while without any treatment. And even if the person feels in the first place that perhaps he ought to receive medical attention, when the ulcer disappears he may be inclined to say, "Thank goodness, I was mistaken. It has gone." But he wasn't mistaken. The germs are alive and multiplying, and when they get carried round the body by the blood stream, there is likely to be a rash on the skin. Then once again the signs disappear and it may be years later before anything else very obvious happens. It may be five years or it may be ten before the germs really strike. They may strike at the heart, causing some sort of heart trouble ; or they may strike at the nerves of the spinal cord and paralyse most of the body ; or perhaps they strike at the brain and the person becomes insane.

Gonorrhoea is not so dangerous a disease as syphilis. It's not such a killer — but it's bad enough. Usually it will show up in the form of a creamy discharge from the sex organs from two to ten days after infection. It may cause a certain amount of pain and difficulty in passing urine, and it can have particularly serious effects in the case of women. Gonorrhoea often causes women to be sterile, to be unable to have the children that they wish for.

Now that isn't a very cheerful sort of picture, is it ? But it's a true one — and only a part of the truth. So you will see that it is not making a fuss for nothing, to insist that people who may possibly be infected must receive treatment. If they don't go for treatment they're in for real trouble. And not only trouble for themselves. There may be a great deal of trouble for other



## Sex Education

people too. A husband may infect a wife, or a wife may infect a husband and — perhaps most tragic of all — a child, who could not by any stretch of the imagination be regarded as responsible for the presence of the infection in the family. The child as yet unborn may be damaged.

In the case of syphilis, the germs that cause the disease can actually pass through from the mother's blood stream into the developing child's blood stream and so the child is infected before birth. It may actually be killed before birth and there may be a miscarriage. It may sometimes go the full period of nine months and be born dead. It may be born very weakly and die shortly afterwards. Or it may not actually die, but just suffer from the effects of the illness for the rest of its life — perhaps developing blindness, deafness or mental defect. That's a pretty grim state of affairs, and one that we should think about very carefully — the fact that syphilis can be passed on to the unborn child in this way.

It isn't quite the same in the case of gonorrhoea, because the germs that cause the disease can't pass through from the mother's blood stream to the child's blood stream, and so the child can't actually be infected before birth. But it can be infected *during* the birth, as it passes out from the womb and through the vagina. If the germs of gonorrhoea are present, they may pass to the child. Usually they attack eyes — and in India, for example, there are millions of children blind as the result of their mothers having had gonorrhoea. In Britain, and indeed in most of the advanced countries, when the child is born the doctor (or whoever is attending to the birth) puts into its eyes drops that will kill any germs there may be. That's all I'm going to say about the actual effects of the venereal diseases.

What about the cures? The first thing to remember is that if any person does at any time suspect that he may possibly be infected, he can, by going to a clinic, be almost guaranteed a cure — if he goes sufficiently early. But the great difficulty is that in so many cases people don't go for treatment early enough. Instead of going immediately, they wait and wait — and if the disease is allowed to get a grip, then it is a good deal more difficult to cure. Actually modern methods of treatment are very reliable and are fairly simple. In the case of syphilis (or pox) the treatment is usually a matter of injections. In the case of gonorrhoea (or



## Specimen Lectures

clap) it is very largely a matter of tablets taken by the mouth. But the important thing is that a cure is possible, providing that treatment is started soon after infection takes place.

You might ask, how can you tell whether you are infected or not? The answer is, *you* can't. A doctor can tell with the aid of a microscope and chemical tests, by which he can examine specimens of blood or discharge. But for most of us it is just not possible to decide for ourselves. The only thing is, if any person at any time is foolish enough to have sexual relations with one whom they do not know to be free from infection, then they have run a risk and should go to a clinic immediately for examination. And they should attend for treatment if advised to do so.

Now what I have said so far has been largely a matter of fact and you have had to take my word for it. But when we come on to the question of codes of sexual behaviour, things are not quite so simple. Each person has the right to his own opinion and I cannot just stand up here and lay down the law — thou shalt do this, thou shalt not do that — for everybody else. I wouldn't do that. It seems to me that the proper thing is for everyone to consider the whole question very carefully and to make up their own minds. What I *can* do is to point out a few facts and put forward a few points of view and then you will each have to think it all out for yourselves.

Where this problem of sex behaviour is concerned we must face the fact that in our society it is usually considered wrong for people to have sexual relations outside marriage. We also know that some people don't by any means agree with that view. So let us have a look at some of the things we have to bear in mind when deciding on the matter.

Apart from the danger of venereal infection I suppose that the most obvious objection — I'm not saying that it is necessarily the most important one — to sexual relations outside marriage, is the possibility of the production of an illegitimate child. I know that people sometimes imagine that they can ensure that no child is going to be born, but they can't be *quite* certain. There is always the possibility, there is always the risk. And you know as well as I do that an illegitimate child doesn't get a square deal in life.

You may feel that it is most unfair that the illegitimate child



## Sex Education

should be branded from the day of its birth and be under a handicap all the days of its life. Most reasonable people, I think, would agree that the child should not be made to suffer for what its parents have done. But the fact is that even if there were no social prejudice against the child, and even if it were sent to a perfectly good institution to be brought up, it would still miss a good deal. A child needs to have a home, to have parents to which it can always look for support and guidance. It needs to have parents on whom it can rely. The illegitimate child does not usually have that solid backing to its life. So surely any couple should take very careful thought before they run the risk of bringing into the world a child that is going to suffer these disadvantages.

For many people, of course, the whole question of sexual relations is decided once and for all by their religious views. To them, sexual relations outside marriage are sinful — and that settles the matter. But for many others that isn't the case. They are undecided and want to bear all sorts of other considerations in mind when they are making their decision.

What other considerations are there? It always seems to me that an important one is that sexual relations outside marriage usually have to be hidden and clandestine. They have to be hole-and-corner affairs. Perhaps the couple fear what their neighbours will say, or perhaps they are afraid that either the man or the woman will be dismissed from their job. But there is usually some reason or other for keeping their love hidden — and that makes it a much less fine relationship than it could be. If a couple are fond of each other they don't want to hide the fact from everyone else. They want to be quite open and honest about it. Love shouldn't be hidden away in a corner. By hiding it and by being secretive about it, a great deal that is best in the relationship is lost.

There are other points to be borne in mind too. I think that one of them is this — that although sex is a very important part of life, it is by no means the whole of life nor by any means the whole of marriage. A married couple have a much greater chance of being happy together if they are well adjusted sexually and if their sexual life is a successful and joyous one. But as the saying goes, "There's more in marriage than four bare legs and a bed". In marriage you expect to have ordinary friendly



## Specimen Lectures

relations — going out walks together, going to the theatre, going to the cinema, just sitting reading, perhaps just washing-up together. It's these small day-by-day incidentals carried out by a couple over a period of years, these small intimacies of everyday life, that knit two lives into one, that do in fact make marriage a real unity. And since marriage is a good deal more than sexual relations, it means that lovers who are not married are taking the sex act and tearing it away from the rest of their lives. Here is sex in one compartment — and there is the rest of their lives in another compartment. But we're unified beings, we're not people who can be torn into pieces and still go on functioning properly. If people are unable to live together completely, as they can do when married and as they usually cannot do when they are unmarried, then sex becomes isolated from the rest of life and the whole relationship is impoverished.

There is, of course, a very great temptation to have pre-marital sexual relations, and this is accentuated by conditions that make for a late age of marriage. Very often people don't marry until they're in their late twenties or perhaps in their thirties — some fifteen or so years after the onset of adolescence. If they have developed normally and healthily, they will have normal sexual interests and normal sexual desires — and yet they have to wait year after year because they cannot afford to marry. It is not surprising that young people sometimes declare that society has no right to say that they shall not have any sexual relations until they're married, unless it makes it possible for them to get married when they wish to. Certainly everyone of us who feels that there is anything to be said for the institution of marriage must also do all we can to remove the economic barriers to it.

When considering this problem of sexual standards we must be clear that there is more than one sort of immorality — the way some people talk you would imagine that there was none other than sexual immorality. Of course that is nonsense. Spiritual pride and avarice and selfishness are much more immoral than fornication. And do let us realise that all sex relationships outside marriage are not of the same character, to be tied up indiscriminately together in a bundle, with a label 'immorality' stuck on them. The relationship between a man who casually picks up a woman — just takes a prostitute — is surely on a very



## Sex Education

different level from that between a couple who are in love with each other and who perhaps would like to get married, but are unable to do so. And we are not doing any good if we fail to recognise the distinctions between these different types of relationship.

As far as prostitution is concerned — the payment of a person for the use of their body for sexual relations — well, I'm sure there is no need to say very much about that, for any decent person will agree that it is a revolting, degrading and immoral state of affairs. The idea of just picking up a person whom you have never known well and converting what should be the closest and most intimate union between two people into a matter of cash payment is really loathsome. It's clearly on a very much lower level than most other sorts of sexual relationship.

Now what about promiscuity? That is to say, the rather free-and-easy, casual sexual relationship in which there is no question of money payment, but in which people change about from one partner to another without the unions ever having any very solid and permanent basis. This sort of flitting about from one person to another is putting sexual relations on much the same level as selecting tennis partners or something of that sort. It is making of sex something rather interesting, rather exciting, rather pleasant, but quite casual. Surely that is missing the best in love? For it does seem to me that the finest relations between a man and a woman can develop only on a basis of some permanence, only on the basis of living together over a long period, so that the couple get to know and understand each other properly. I don't say that it must necessarily always be *completely* permanent — that's going to raise the whole question of divorce. But I'm not going to say anything about that now — if people wish to discuss it later, well and good.

For many young people, however, the problem of full sexual relations is not nearly so immediate and pressing as that of what the Americans call 'necking and petting'. A couple may be fond of each other and they go dancing and rambling and swimming together. Naturally enough, they feel that an occasional kiss doesn't come amiss, and they like a hug and caress now and then. All this is just what one would expect of a lively young lad and lass. But things don't always stop there. The caressing may become more and more intimate, and before they know what



## Specimen Lectures

has happened, the couple may find their sexual feelings very much aroused and may only with difficulty be able to refrain from actual sexual intercourse. This rather intimate love-making is what I have in mind at present.

It is not that there is anything fundamentally wrong about it — under the proper circumstances. But the proper function of such caressing is as a preliminary to sexual intercourse, which forms the natural climax to it. And if the climax is not to come, the couple are likely to be left emotionally high and dry. During love-making feelings of tension are accumulated, while in completed intercourse they are released. So this uncompleted caressing is rather like stretching elastic and not allowing it to contract again. And if you do that too often the elastic will lose its elasticity. That's the trouble with too much necking and petting. Emotions are stretched and not given proper release.

The difficulty is that it is so easy to go further than one originally intended. One thing leads to another, and the further one goes the more difficult it is to hold back. The only wise thing is for each couple to think things out, to decide on their own standard of behaviour, and then to stick to it. And it's well to leave oneself a margin of safety, not to go as far as one feels is permissible, in case one slips a little and finds oneself going a good deal further.

If you want to be quite sure of keeping control of yourself you will naturally be careful about alcohol. I'm not a kill-joy and I like an occasional pint of beer, but there is no doubt that drinking alcohol does reduce one's self-control. After a drink or two you may find yourself slipping, and perhaps doing things for which you are afterwards sorry. I don't say you should all be rabid teetotallers, but at any rate it is well to recognise that alcohol does have its dangers.

Now I've been over a few of the main considerations that must be borne in mind in connection with the question of sexual relationships. But there is one other point that I must deal with before finishing. It is what is often called 'the double standard' of morality. One comes across men who are away from home — it may be that they are out of the country — and they have sexual relations with someone they happen to meet in their new surroundings. Yet often the very men who are themselves running affairs with other women would be quite horrified at the



~~Sex~~ Education

thought that their wives or sweethearts might be doing the same with other men. Now for the life of me I can't see the justice in that attitude. What is sauce for the goose is sauce for the gander. It's either sauce for both or sauce for neither. Surely there can be no question of different standards of behaviour for men and for women. What is right for the one sex is right for the other. What is wrong for one is wrong for both.

Well, I could go on talking for hours. There is so much to say on this question of sex. It isn't a matter that can be fully dealt with in three meetings — nor in thirty meetings for that matter. But I think I had better come to a close, as people will no doubt have questions to ask and points of view to express — not only about the matters we have discussed to-night, but also about those that have been dealt with at the previous meetings.

## LECTURE D

This was delivered to a meeting of parents of pupils at a secondary school which was inaugurating a carefully thought-out scheme of sex education. The approach was not 'May we do this?' but 'We are going to do this, and hope that you will co-operate with us'. Hence the insistence on the value of free and frank discussion.

I am very glad to have the opportunity of speaking to you all to-night, for I feel that it is a very good thing when the staff and parents of the pupils at a school get together to discuss the sex education of their children. That's true, of course, of all education. The more co-operation there is between the school and the home, the better. But it's particularly true of sex education. In some matters, such as the teaching of arithmetic or geography, the school can get along reasonably well even if the home does little to help, but not so where sex education is concerned. To get the best results, close partnership between parents and teachers is absolutely essential. We each need to know what the other is doing and when they are doing it, so that our plans may be made to dovetail in together and we may make a really good job of it.

But I wonder whether, before getting down to details, I ought not to say a few words about the whole question of sex education. Most of our generation received very little sex educa-



## Specimen Lectures

tion, or at least very little that was part of a carefully thought-out plan shared between school and home. We may perhaps have had a chat with father or mother, and maybe a heart-to-heart from our head teacher before leaving school. But except for the few fortunate ones, most of us had little else. For the rest of our knowledge we were dependent upon what we could pick up from our pals, or upon overheard fragments of conversation between adults. And that is hardly an ideal way of receiving our education upon one of the most important things in life. If we draw up careful schemes of instruction about how to calculate the time it will take for an express train to get from London to Glasgow or a camel from Cairo to Timbuctoo, isn't it rather astonishing that instruction about how life is passed on, and about the relations between man and woman and parent and child, should be left for any chance lesson at the street-corner or in the gutter?

Most parents to-day realise this and want their children to understand something of the place of sex in life. Even during the last three or four years there has been a very marked change in public opinion on the matter — largely as a result of conditions arising out of the war. With the breaking-up of many homes by the absence of one of the parents or by the evacuation of the children, and with the generally heightened emotional tension of the times, there has been a loosening of sexual behaviour, and an increase in the prevalence of the venereal diseases. But although it is the war which has caused so many people to think again on this matter, I do not regard sex education as essentially a war-time problem. It is a problem of peace too. In normal times our young people will be growing up into adults, and will be faced with the decision as to how they are going to use their sexual powers — as a means of enriching life, or as a means of besmirching it. So while we must always keep the present abnormal conditions at the back of our minds, I think that we shall probably be wisest to think of sex education mainly as a part of our normal educational programme for normal children in normal times.

So much by way of introduction. Now what are we going to do about it? It may be that some of you feel that there is no need to do anything, that we can leave the whole matter in the lap of the gods. There may even be some who feel that it's



## Sex Education

*unwise* to do anything and that the longer the children are kept in the dark the better. If so, I hope that you won't hesitate to say so when we come on to the discussion later in the meeting. We can all learn from each other, and these are matters that we must thrash out together. I'm giving you my views now, and I hope that you'll give me yours later.

Now if we agree that something *should* be done, we've to make up our minds who's going to do it. There are, naturally, different opinions on this matter. Teachers often say that sex education is the parents' job, while parents are inclined to say it's the teacher's. Which is right? Perhaps they both are. There's an element of truth in both statements. I suggest that it *is* the parents' job, and that it's *also* a job for the teacher. They can each do something. Isn't it about time that we stopped arguing about what the other person *hasn't* done, and paid a little more attention to what we, each one of us, *can* do? And that's why we're meeting here to-night, to see how parents and teachers can co-operate.

I should like, if I may, to look at the matter first of all from the point of view of the teacher. Here we have children coming into our care at the age of about 11, and we want to do what we can for them. But what *we* can do depends to an enormous extent upon the sort of home background they have, and what their relations with their parents have been. Have their questions about where babies come from been answered freely and naturally, or have they been told downright lies, or put off on one pretext or another? The answer to that question will make a good deal of difference to their attitude to sex. There's the first thing that we teachers should like. We'd like to feel that the parents of our pupils have let the gooseberry bush get on with its proper job of producing gooseberries — and have answered their children's questions honestly. Mind you, a certain amount of discretion is needed. Obviously one doesn't want to load up children with information they're not ready for. Sometimes one comes across parents — very 'modern' they'll tell you they are — who pride themselves on the fearless way in which they answer their children's questions. But when I hear how they do it, I feel that it's not so much fearless as fearful! The poor little mite asks, "Mummy, where do babies come from?" — and instead of being given an odd sentence or two in reply and



## Specimen Lectures

then running off and playing trains, it's subjected to a long lecture upon the anatomy and physiology of reproduction. Preserve us from 'modern' parents such as these! Admittedly they're on the right line — the only trouble is that they've gone several stations too far! But seriously, if the child's questions have been answered honestly and casually and discreetly by the parent, our task as teachers is enormously easier. And if our pupils have been used to seeing their brothers and sisters without any clothes on, so that they've no morbid curiosity about the mystery of what the other sex looks like, so much the better.

Now let us look at it through the other end of the telescope. What can you, as parents, reasonably expect us, as teachers, to do? I think that you have the right to expect that the school will give your children a simple factual outline of sex and reproduction. Of course, they should already have learned most of the facts from you, but in our biology lessons we can place them in their proper perspective, and help your children to sort out all kinds of odds and ends of information that they've picked up here and there, and make a complete picture of the whole. We can also give them some idea of the proper relations between man and woman and between parent and child; and by no means least important, we can provide an atmosphere in the school that will help them to look on sex as something natural and wholesome and proper.

So much for generalities. That's easy enough. But suppose that we get down to brass tacks — how exactly is all this to be done? That's not so easy. All that I can do is to make a few suggestions and hope that you'll help me out in the discussion later.

One thing that you will naturally wish to know is how much we propose telling your children, and at what age. This question of age is an important one. Some of you may be rather surprised when I suggest that the essential facts should be thoroughly understood by children before they are 12 years old. I've reasons for suggesting this age, which may seem to some of you to be an unduly early one. My reasons, in the main, are threefold.

First is the fact that if it's left much later the children will already have picked up most of the knowledge. Picked it up in a distorted and twisted form, no doubt, but still — picked it up. It really is astonishing the change that has taken place during



## Sex Education

these last twenty or thirty years in the age at which youngsters learn these things. As far as I know, I was not a particularly ignorant child, but I'm quite certain that at the age of 14 I hadn't a tithe of the knowledge that boys and girls of that age have to-day. It might not be very good manners, but I sometimes think that it would do them a lot of good if some adults could listen in to the conversation of their children in the street or on the playground. It would probably be an eye-opener to many of them. Mind you, there isn't necessarily any harm in this sexual conversation. It all depends on how things are talked about — openly and freely, or with half-ashamed sniggers. But it's a fact, and a fact we have to face, that if we leave the instruction of our children much beyond the age of 11 or 12 we shall be too late. You probably know the story of the father whose son Johnny had reached the age of 14, and who felt that he should tell him the 'facts of life'. So he sent mother off to a whist drive and elder sister off to a dance, and as soon as younger sister was safely upstairs in bed he sat Johnny down on the other side of the fireplace. "Johnny," he stumbled. "Yes, Dad?" "Well — er, I want to have a chat with you." "Yes, Dad, what about?" "Um — er — well — about girls and things." "O.K., Dad," came Johnny's reply. "What d'you want to know?" Now I can't guarantee the literal truth of that story — far from it! But there's an undercurrent of truth in it. We must not leave things too late.

The second reason for my proposing this rather early age of instruction is a simple one. It is just that round about the age of 12 in the case of girls, and somewhat later with boys, very important and often rather disturbing changes begin to take place in their bodies. They begin as early as this to change from girls and boys to women and men. Now this period of adolescence can hardly fail to be in some ways an upsetting one, for not only are there important bodily changes but there are also very important emotional changes too. But if our young people know what changes to expect, if the girl is prepared for the onset of menstruation, and if the boy knows that he may expect occasional night losses, adolescence will lose a good deal of its uncertainty for them. If we are going to instruct our children, surely it's better to do so in time to give them the maximum possible help, and not leave it until they've already had a year or two of worry.



## Specimen Lectures

But my most compelling reason for wanting to get this factual instruction over by the age of 12 is this. It's not based on theory at all, but is the result of sheer hard experience. Teachers who have dealt with these matters in class find that pupils older than, say, 14 are beginning to develop an emotional interest in sex and there is sometimes an undercurrent of excitement or of embarrassment in the class when sex is being discussed for the first time. But with the 11-year-olds there is not the slightest trace of this. They accept the whole thing completely naturally and normally, in exactly the same matter-of-fact way as they accept information about how their skeleton is constructed or how they digest their food. Their interest is one of pure intellectual curiosity — and surely that is the best frame of mind in which to learn these things. To the 11-year-old the emotional or affectional side of sex means little or nothing. At this age they have not begun to feel sexual urges or desires themselves, and they can form no real idea of what they are like. This is shown up in the questions they ask. Most children know that sometimes unwanted children are born. They've usually overheard a conversation between adults, who fondly imagine that "Tommy won't understand" or "Mary is too young to know". They may not understand completely — but a half-grasped idea of what they've overheard sticks at the back of their minds and later on it crops out. So they ask in all innocence, "If people don't want babies why do they do it?" By their way of thinking, if adults have sexual intercourse without the set intention of producing a baby, it just shows what idiots adults are!

We are proposing, therefore, to begin sex education in this school from the first year our pupils enter, and you will naturally wish to know something of what we propose to teach. We shall, of course, fit the teaching to suit the ages of the pupils. With the younger ones, the 11's and 12's, we shall do little more than give an outline of the structure of the sex organs and the way they work. No elaborate details about all that happens during intercourse — that would be quite unsuitable. But just the scientific terms for the sex organs — that, I feel, is very important, for it is a great help for children to have a vocabulary in which they can discuss sex, without having to use those old Anglo-Saxon four-letter words which may have been perfectly proper in polite conversation a few hundred years ago, but which through the



centuries have sunk in the social scale and have now reached the gutter — and the bare facts of the transference of the sperm from man to woman, and of the growth of the baby inside the mother. The whole thing will form part of a general biology course, so that sex will in no way be specially emphasised. And then we shall give them an idea of what changes they may expect to take place in themselves during the next year or two, so that the girls will be prepared for the onset of menstruation, and the boys will not be frightened out of their wits the first time a seminal emission takes place.

With the slightly older pupils of 13 and 14 we shall cover much the same ground, but in addition the lads will be told a little of the truth about masturbation — the so-called 'self-abuse' which is often a great source of anxiety and worry.

So far as the upper forms are concerned, the 15's and 16's and over, we are dealing with pupils who are almost young adults, and naturally we shall go into more detail with them. They need to know something about the institution of marriage, about the relations between young men and young women, and, we believe, something about the venereal diseases too. Needless to say, as the pupils pass up the school and become older, they also will discuss these topics.

Now — I've put my cards on the table. This is what I propose should be done in the school. But it is for you, each one of you, to decide how far you are willing to collaborate with us. I've left plenty of time for questions and for discussion, and I've no doubt that it will be well used.

•



## Appendix VI

### Guide to Further Reading

THE shortcomings of this book will have made it sufficiently clear that those who are really interested in sex education will need to read much further. A fairly comprehensive bibliography is therefore appended, and in order to help readers in their selection of books, each one is briefly described and those which should perhaps be read first in their several categories are marked with an asterisk. The titles are listed under the following heads :

1. Educational Methods.
2. Biology.
3. Pathology and Aberrations.
4. Sociology and Ethics.
5. Marriage Hygiene and Family Planning.
6. The Child.
7. The Adolescent.
8. The Adult.
9. For Children and Younger Adolescents.
10. For Older Adolescents and Young Adults.
11. General and Miscellaneous.

These heads are not mutually exclusive, and a title occurring under one of them might in some cases equally have been placed under another.

#### I. EDUCATIONAL METHODS

- *Science in General Education.* Appleton-Century. Pp. 591.  
(Published for the Progressive Education Association.)

A valuable work, which should be studied by all science teachers. It gives detailed suggestions for making science teaching the basis for health (including sex) education and for social adjustment.

- *The Social Studies in General Education.* Appleton-Century. Pp. 401. (Published for the Progressive Education Association.)

Contains much material valuable for sex education, especially by teachers dealing with geography, economics, civics, careers, etc.



## Sex Education

ALLERS. *Sex Psychology in Education*. Herder. Pp. 287.

A valuable discussion of sex education from the Roman Catholic point of view. Well worth reading by non-Catholics also.

\*BIGELOW. *Sex Education*. American Social Hygiene Association. Pp. 307.

A pioneer work, first published in 1916, but still very valuable.

BLATZ AND BOTT. *Parents and the Pre-School Child*. Dent. Pp. 306.

A simple outline of methods of child care, with particular reference to the formation of habits and attitudes, including those towards sex.

BRAITHWAITE. *Parent and Child*. Nelson. Pp. 173.

A simple compendium of suggestions on the home upbringing of children, with a section on sex education.

GRUENBERG. *Parents and Sex Education*. American Social Hygiene Association. Pp. 100.

Although published over twenty years ago, this is still one of the best books for parents of children of pre-school age.

GRUENBERG. *High Schools and Sex Education*. U.S. Public Health Service. Pp. 110.

An excellent and highly practical publication, giving detailed suggestions for teaching methods, many of which are applicable to British schools also.

HARTLEY. *Sex Education and National Health*. Parsons. Pp. 152.

Although written two decades ago, this book is still well worth reading.

\*MEAD. *Growing Up in New Guinea*. Penguin Books. Pp. 215.

A study of a primitive people's attitude to and education for sexual relations, leading on to suggestions regarding sex education in modern society.

\*NASH (Editor). *Education for Christian Marriage*. Student Christian Movement Press. Pp. 304.

A symposium of articles by different authors, putting the Christian point of view on marriage preparation. Deals with the religious, social, physiological, psychological, legal and educational aspects of the matter.

NEILL. *That Dreadful School*. Jenkins. Pp. 224.

An interesting account of the experiences and views of an unorthodox schoolmaster.

RUSSELL. *Education and the Social Order*. Allen and Unwin. Pp. 254.

Contains an unconventional but sane chapter on "Sex in Education".



## Guide to Further Reading

\*STRAIN. *Sex Guidance in Family Life Education*. Macmillan.  
Pp. 340.

An interesting account of the experiences and views of a woman pioneer of sex education in the United States.

STRAIN. *New Patterns in Sex Teaching*. Appleton-Century.  
Pp. 242.

An outline of the normal sex interests of children from infancy to adolescence, with suggestions for dealing with common sex 'problems', and containing valuable suggestions about answering their questions.

STRAIN. *Your Child, his Family and Friends*. Appleton-Century. Pp. 206.

A simply written book about the home education of children, suitable for all parents.

TUCKER AND POUT. *Sex Education in the School*. Howe.  
Pp. 156.

An interesting account by two pioneers of sex education of their experiences in giving talks to some thousands of school children.

### 2. BIOLOGY

\*ALVERDES. *Social Life in the Animal World*. Kegan Paul.  
Pp. 216.

A study of reproduction, courtship, mating, and family and social relationships in animals. Invaluable to the biology teacher, and useful as background reading for all concerned in sex education.

BAITSELL. *Human Biology*. McGraw-Hill. Pp. 621.

A very full text, covering human physiology in some detail, with constant references to other organisms. Should be very helpful as a source-book for teachers wishing to give their biology lessons a human orientation.

BAKER. *Sex in Man and Animals*. Routledge. Pp. 175.

An outline of sexual phenomena — including sex characters, sex determination, sex hormones, sex abnormalities, parthenogenesis, sex ratio, sex behaviour, etc. — throughout the animal kingdom. Should be read by all teachers of biology.

BEST AND TAYLOR. *The Living Body*. Chapman and Hall.  
Pp. 563.

A clear and up-to-date account of human physiology, suitable for teachers and older students.

BIBBY. *Simple Experiments in Biology*. Heinemann. Pp. 164.

A collection of more than six hundred experiments, including some on reproduction and heredity.

BIBBY. *Heredity, Eugenics and Social Progress*. Gollancz. Pp. 93.

A simple outline for the beginner.



## Sex Education

BURDON, MACDONALD AND MAXWELL. *Anatomical Atlas*. Faber. Pp. 58.

An excellent collection of anatomical diagrams, accompanied by fairly full explanatory notes.

COLE. *Early Theories of Sexual Generation*. Oxford University Press. Pp. 230.

A book for the biology teacher, giving an interesting outline of the development of our knowledge of the mechanism and significance of sexual reproduction.

DAVENPORT. *How we came by our Bodies*. Henry Holt. Pp. 401.

A well-illustrated and fairly detailed, but simply written, account of human embryology, cytology and genetics.

DICKINSON. *Human Sex Anatomy*. Baillière, Tindall and Cox. Pp. 145.

A standard work for the specialist.

JENNINGS. *The Biological Basis of Human Nature*. Faber. Pp. 384.

Deals with those aspects of modern experimental biology of most interest in considering human personality and society (e.g. genetics, embryological development, effect of environment, endocrine secretions). Written in non-technical language.

MARSHALL. *An Introduction to Sexual Physiology*. Longmans, Green. Pp. 167.

A standard work for the biologist.

\*MITCHELL. *The Childhood of Animals*. Penguin Books. Pp. 243.

An interesting study, of particular value as a source-book for the teacher of biology.

MULLER. *Out of the Night*. Gollancz. Pp. 160.

A geneticist's view of the future. Contains a simple account of human heredity, with a discussion of eugenic possibilities.

NEWMAN. *Twins and Supertwins*. Hutchinson. Pp. 164.

An interesting account of multiple births, invaluable as a help to the teacher in answering children's questions.

NEWMAN *et al.* *Twins*. University of Chicago Press. Pp. 369.

A detailed study of many pairs of identical and fraternal twins; and the influence of heredity and environment upon them.

PARSHLEY. *The Science of Human Reproduction*. Eugenics Publishing Co. Pp. 319.

A fairly detailed and well illustrated, yet simply written, account of sexual physiology; with sections on population and behaviour problems.

PEACOCK. *Biology in the School*. Heinemann. Pp. 354.

A valuable handbook for teachers of biology, making suggestions



## Guide to Further Reading

for dealing with sex as part of the biology course, and giving detailed suggestions as to syllabuses and teaching technique.

ROBERTS. *The Miracle of the Human Body*. Odhams. Pp. 384.  
A richly illustrated and simply written volume, including sections on sex and reproduction.

ROBSON. *Recent Advances in Sex and Reproductive Physiology*. Churchill. Pp. 329.

A book for the specialist, dealing particularly with endocrine action, menstruation, ovulation, pregnancy and parturition.

\*ROSTAND. *Adventures before Birth*. Gollancz. Pp. 157.

An intriguing account of human embryology, full of interesting facts and figures, and easily understood by the non-biologist.

\*SCHEINFELD. *You and Heredity*. Chatto and Windus. Pp. 434.  
An absorbingly interesting account of the principles of heredity, with particular reference to humans. Generously illustrated and written in simple language.

\*WIESNER. *Sex*. Thornton Butterworth. Pp. 256.

A simple outline of the biology of sex, mainly in animals.

\*WRIGHT. *What is Sex?* Williams and Norgate. Pp. 172.

A simple account of sex and reproduction in plants and animals, including humans.

ZUCKERMAN. *The Social Life of Monkeys and Apes*. Kegan Paul. Pp. 357.

A valuable account of the social and sexual life of non-human primates, which throws a good deal of light on certain aspects of human behaviour.

### 3. PATHOLOGY AND ABERRATIONS

BURKE. *Venereal Diseases*. Lewis. Pp. 549.

A detailed study for the specialist.

\*CARPENTER. *The Intermediate Sex*. Allen and Unwin. Pp. 160.

A simply written and sensitive study of the emotional characteristics of the invert.

CAWADIAS. *Hermaphrodites*. Heinemann. Pp. 78.

A collection of case-histories of human hermaphroditism.

HIRSCHFELD. *Sexual Anomalies and Perversions*. Aldor. Pp. 630.

A detailed study for the specialist.

HOYER. *Man into Woman*. Jarrolds. Pp. 255.

An astonishing account of an almost complete sex reversal, which would be incredible were it not vouched for by a leading sexologist.

MANCHEE. *Social Service in the Clinic for Venereal Diseases*. Baillière, Tindall and Cox. Pp. 119.



## Sex Education

A valuable description of the services available, written from the viewpoint of the social worker.

MARSHALL. *Venereal Diseases : Diagnosis and Treatment*. Macmillan. Pp. 340.

A detailed study for the specialist.

PARRAN. *Shadow on the Land : Syphilis*. Reynal and Hitchcock. Pp. 309.

A survey of social and public health problems, by the Surgeon-General of the U.S. Public Health Service. Deals with the position in most parts of the world.

WALKER AND STRAUSS. *Sexual Disorders in the Male*. Hamish Hamilton. Pp. 248.

A reliable but fairly simply written work.

\*WARWICK. *Handbook on Venereal Diseases*. Faber. Pp. 233.

A fairly simple outline, suitable for the non-medical reader.

### 4. SOCIOLOGY AND ETHICS

ASHLEY-MONTAGU. *Coming into Being among the Australian Aborigines*. Routledge. Pp. 362.

A study of the procreative beliefs of a people ignorant of the physiological facts of parenthood.

BABER. *Marriage and the Family*. McGraw-Hill. Pp. 656.

An excellent book, surveying the history of family relations especially in the east and in the early days of American settlement ; and giving material and advice on which to base decisions concerning chastity, courtship, marriage, etc. Although a large volume, is not at all difficult reading, and would be particularly useful to teachers and youth leaders.

BLOCH. *A History of English Sexual Morals*. Aldor. Pp. 664.

A standard work for the specialist.

BLOCH. *The Sexual Life of our Time*. Rebman. Pp. 790.

A standard work for the specialist.

BLUM. *Marriage*. Jarrolds. Pp. 288.

A challenging exposition of unorthodox views on the marriage relationship, by the French ex-Premier.

BRIMBLE AND MAY. *Social Studies and World Citizenship*. Macmillan. Pp. 158.

Contains interesting chapters on " Science and the Social Studies " and " Sex Guidance as a Social Discipline " which make some valuable suggestions.

BURT. *The Young Delinquent*. University of London Press. Pp. 645.

Gives a great deal of factual information and many valuable



## Guide to Further Reading

suggestions with which all interested in sex education should be familiar.

CLEPHANE. *Towards Sex Freedom*. John Lane. Pp. 243.

An historical survey of the fight for woman's emancipation, from Mary Wollstonecraft onwards.

\*COLE. *Marriage Past and Present*. Dent. Pp. 301.

An interesting and simply written study of the history of marriage and of its position in the modern world.

\*C.O.P.E.C. *The Relation of the Sexes*. Longmans, Green. Pp. 220.

A report presented to the Conference on Christian Politics, Economics and Citizenship (1924) and summarising Christian attitudes to sex and marriage.

\*DELL. *Love in the Machine Age*. Routledge. Pp. 428.

A consideration of the problems of sexual ethics in modern society, by one of the leaders of the 'Greenwich Village group'. Should be read particularly by youth leaders and social workers.

✓ ELLIS. *Sex in Relation to Society*. Heinemann. Pp. 529.

A standard work dealing with sex education, nakedness, love, chastity, prostitution, marriage, venereal diseases, etc.

✓ ENGELS. *The Origin of the Family*. Lawrence and Wishart. Pp. 216.

Although outmoded in many respects, this pioneer work is still worthy of study.

GARLE. *Social Hygiene To-day*. Allen and Unwin. Pp. 387.

Deals with prostitution, the venereal diseases and the legal aspects of social hygiene in various countries.

✓ \*GRIFFITH. *Sex and Citizenship*. Gollancz. Pp. 215.

Deals simply with the social and ethical aspects of sex, including marriage preparation.

HIRSCHFIELD. *Women East and West*. Heinemann. Pp. 321.

The last work of a pioneer sexologist, giving the results of his travels and studies over a large part of the world. Discusses the relationships between the sexes, marriage customs, family structure, effects of religions, sex education, etc. in different countries.

HODANN. *History of Modern Morals*. Heinemann. Pp. 338.

A fairly simple outline.

KIEFER. *Sexual Life in Ancient Rome*. Routledge. Pp. 379.

A detailed study for the serious student.

LECKY. *History of European Morals from Augustus to Charlemagne*. Longmans, Green. Pp. 407.

A standard work with an enormous amount of detail. Useful as a source-book for teachers of history, classics, citizenship, and religion.



## Sex Education

LICHTENBERGER. *Divorce—A Social Interpretation*. McGraw-Hill. Pp. 472.

A detailed study, outlining the position of divorce in preliterate societies, the ancient world, the Christian world and the modern world (with particular reference to the U.S.A.) ; and considering the physiological, psychological, economic, social, ethical and religious factors affecting the stability of marriage.

LINDSEY AND EVANS. *The Companionate Marriage*. Brentanos. Pp. 396.

An unconventional advocacy of trial-marriage. In some ways irrelevant to English conditions, but containing many interesting suggestions.

MACE. *Does Sex Morality Matter?* Rich and Cowan. Pp. 154.

A defence of Christian standards in sex behaviour.

MALINOWSKI. *Sex and Repression in Savage Society*. Kegan Paul. Pp. 285.

An interesting study of the way in which Melanesians look on sex, showing how sexual attitudes are largely dependent upon social and cultural conditions.

MALINOWSKI. *The Sexual Life of Savages*. Routledge. Pp. 506.

A standard work, giving the results of a detailed study among the natives of the Trobriand Islands. Its account of the sexual life of children and adolescents is particularly interesting and thought-provoking.

MAY. *Social Control of Sex Expression*. Allen and Unwin. Pp. 245.

A simply written account of sexual moral codes among primitive peoples, ancient Hebrews, early Christians, and in Anglo-Saxon and subsequent England and America.

MEAD. *Sex and Temperament in Three Primitive Societies*. Routledge. Pp. 335.

An interesting study of mountain-dwellers, river-dwellers and lake-dwellers in New Guinea, which suggests that sex behaviour and characteristics are very largely socially determined.

RUSSELL. *Marriage and Morals*. Allen and Unwin. Pp. 254.

An erudite and thought-provoking discussion of sexual morality in relation to religious beliefs and social conditions. Should be read by all adults.

STERN. *The Family Past and Present*. Appleton-Century. Pp. 461. (Published for the Progressive Education Association.)

A source-book covering family life in primitive societies, the classical world, medieval Europe, and in modern times. Should be available for reference by all who have to do with education for family life.



## Guide to Further Reading

- UNWIN. *Sex and Culture*. Oxford University Press. Pp. 676.  
Seeks to prove the thesis that sexual continence in a society is essential to the development of a high culture.
- VAERTING AND VAERTING. *The Dominant Sex*. Allen and Unwin. Pp. 240.  
Presents evidence that many characteristics often considered to be due to innate sexual differences are in fact largely determined by the social relations of the sexes.
- \*WESTERMARCK. *A Short History of Marriage*. Macmillan. Pp. 326.  
A study of the origin of marriage and of the marriage customs of various societies. Provides a good general background to sexual anthropology.
- WESTERMARCK. *The Future of Marriage in Western Civilisation*. Macmillan. Pp. 281.  
From an outline of the origin of marriage, proceeds to consider its values and its weaknesses, proposed alternatives and improvements, and finally makes suggestions about its probable future.

### 5. MARRIAGE HYGIENE AND FAMILY PLANNING

- CHESSER. *Love without Fear*. Rich and Cowan. Pp. 288.  
A guide to sex technique, simply written and more explicit than many popular works.
- DICKINSON AND BRYANT. *Control of Conception*. Baillière, Tindall and Cox. Pp. 290.  
A reliable and well-illustrated guide to the technique of contraception, with an appendix relating to conditions in the U.S.A.
- \*EXNER. *The Sexual Side of Marriage*. Allen and Unwin. Pp. 192.  
A frank and helpful account, paying particular attention to the securing of perfect adjustment between the partners.
- GRIFFITH. *The Childless Family : its Cause and Cure*. Kegan Paul. Pp. 128.  
A simply written and well illustrated little book.
- \*GRIFFITH. *Modern Marriage and Birth Control*. Gollancz. Pp. 221.  
A simply written account of the technique of sexual relations, with an appendix giving lists of family planning clinics in Great Britain.
- HIMES. *Medical History of Contraception*. Allen and Unwin. Pp. 521.  
A useful reference book, dealing with methods of family limitation in preliterate societies, ancient Egyptian and biblical times, Greece and Rome, China and the Far East, and Western countries in medieval and modern times.



## Sex Education

\*HIMES. *Practical Birth-Control Methods*. Allen and Unwin. Pp. 248.

An excellent account of various methods, well illustrated and critically considered. Includes also a consideration of related matters such as abortion, and a brief history of contraception. Has valuable appendices giving lists of clinics, interested societies, reliable contraceptives, etc.

PEARL. *The Natural History of Population*. Oxford University Press. Pp. 416.

An authoritative study of population problems, with a wealth of statistics and illustrative graphs and charts.

SANGER AND STONE (Editors). *The Practice of Contraception*. Baillière, Tindall and Cox. Pp. 313.

A symposium by authors of many nations, particularly valuable for its hundred-odd-page survey of clinics, etc. in England, U.S.A., U.S.S.R., Germany, Scandinavia and the Far East.

\*STONE AND STONE. *A Marriage Manual*. Gollancz. Pp. 352.

Written in question-and-answer form, this is a very valuable guide to marriage relationships.

\*TITMUSS. *Parents Revolt*. Secker and Warburg. Pp. 128.

An interesting and simple account of the declining birth-rate of Britain and other countries, with an estimate of its causes and suggestions for a new population policy.

VAN DE WELDE. *Ideal Marriage*. Heinemann. Pp. 298.

A standard work on marriage relations.

WHITNEY. *The Case for Sterilisation*. John Lane. Pp. 215.

A reasoned statement that should be given careful consideration.

## 6. THE CHILD

\* ——— *Advances in Understanding the Child*. Home and School Council. Pp. 75.

A valuable collection of essays on various aspects of childhood.

BLATZ. *The Five Sisters*. Dent. Pp. 194.

A study of the first four years of life of the Dionne quintuplets, richly illustrated by photographs.

BLATZ. *Understanding the Young Child*. University of London Press. Pp. 271.

A simply written study of the nursery years.

\*BOWLEY. *The Natural Development of the Child*. Livingstone. Pp. 172.

A simple outline of child development from babyhood to adolescence, with suggestions for handling the difficulties which are likely to occur. Suitable for parents, teachers and youth leaders.



## Guide to Further Reading

BRIDGES. *The Social and Emotional Development of the Pre-School Child*. Kegan Paul. Pp. 277.

A study of children from 2 to 5 years of age in attendance at a nursery school. Richly illustrated by photographs of children at various activities.

CHADWICK. *Difficulties in Child Development*. Allen and Unwin. Pp. 411.

Of particular value to parents, this book gives a balanced account of child development, child difficulties and child phantasies.

\*HUTCHISON. *Motives of Conduct in Children*. Jarrolds. Pp. 185.  
A valuable but simple book, with sections on sex instruction and sexual precocity. Should be read by all parents and teachers of young children.

ISAACS. *Intellectual Growth in Young Children*. Routledge. Pp. 370.

Contains a valuable appendix on "Children's 'Why' Questions", which throws considerable light on children's real motives in making queries.

\*ISAACS. *The Nursery Years*. Routledge. Pp. 138.  
A simple outline of the characteristics of the normal child up to the age of 6 years. Suitable as reading for elementary parentcraft classes.

ISAACS. *Social Development in Young Children*. Routledge. Pp. 480.

A thorough study, mainly based on observation of children at a nursery school and paying particular attention to their sexual development.

LOWENFELD. *Play in Childhood*. Gollancz. Pp. 345.  
An interesting and simply written study of childhood play, including that connected with faeces, urine, etc.

MANNIN. *Common Sense and the Child*. Jarrolds. Pp. 286.  
An unconventional but valuable study of childhood. Useful for parents and teachers.

MOLL. *The Sexual Life of the Child*. Allen and Unwin. Pp. 339.

An old but standard work, dealing with the physiology, psychology and pathology of sex; sexual manifestations in childhood; and sex education.

\*THOM. *Everyday Problems of the Everyday Child*. Appleton-Century. Pp. 350.

Deals very sensibly with the major problems of childhood, including those relating to sex.

TUCKER AND POUT. *Awkward Questions of Childhood*. Howe. Pp. 162.



## Sex Education

Should give many parents the knowledge necessary to answer some of their children's questions about sex.

VALENTINE. *The Psychology of Early Childhood*. Methuen. Pp. 557.

A detailed study of five siblings, with a valuable chapter on "The Development of Sex and Sex-interests".

### 7. THE ADOLESCENT

\* ——— *Advances in Understanding the Adolescent*. Home and School Council. Pp. 107.

A valuable collection of essays on various aspects of adolescence.

AVERILL. *Adolescence*. Harrap. Pp. 495.

A well-documented study of adolescence, based on many years of teaching experience, and the examination of some thousands of individual case histories.

BLOS. *The Adolescent Personality*. Appleton-Century. Pp. 517.

A detailed study of over six hundred case histories of normal adolescents. Four individual cases are described in detail, and give the book a concreteness and reality often missing from descriptions of 'the average adolescent'.

\*BREW. *In the Service of Youth*. Faber. Pp. 300.

A book to be read by all interested in work with young people — solid, sane, witty and provocative. Contains sections upon the sex interests and problems of adolescents, and upon mixed clubs and the club programme.

BROMLEY AND BRITTEN. *Youth and Sex*. Harper. Pp. 303.

A detailed study of the experiences and attitudes of 1300 college students of both sexes. Particularly valuable for parents and youth leaders.

\*CHADWICK. *Adolescent Girlhood*. Allen and Unwin. Pp. 303.

A particularly valuable study of female adolescence, drawing on physiology, psychology, anthropology, folk-lore and history. Should be read by all teachers, parents and youth leaders.

COLE. *Psychology of Adolescence*. Allen and Unwin. Pp. 503.

Covers a much wider range than the title indicates, giving a wealth of factual data on the physical, emotional, social, ethical and intellectual characteristics of adolescence.

ECKERT AND MARSHALL. *When Youth leave School*. McGraw-Hill. Pp. 360. (Published for the Regents of the University of the State of New York.)

A detailed study of the abilities, interests, leisure activities and future plans of young people about to leave school, and of those who have recently left. Particularly valuable for youth leaders.

HALL. *Adolescence*. Appleton-Century. 2 vols. Pp. 589 and 784.



## Guide to Further Reading

A standard work, gathering together an enormous mass of data on all aspects of adolescence — growth in height, weight, size and complexity of organs, motor functions, sexual development (bodily and emotional), social sense, intellect ; diseases and abnormalities of body and mind ; adolescence in literature, biography and history ; adolescence in various primitive societies. A book for the serious student.

HALL. *Youth*. Appleton-Century. Pp. 379.

An abridged version of the above standard work.

IOVETZ-TERESHCHENKO. *Friendship-Love in Adolescence*.

Allen and Unwin. Pp. 367.

An interesting account of the development of a boy from 13 to 16 years of age, and of his attachments to other adolescents, male and female.

JENKINSON. *What do Boys and Girls Read?* Methuen. Pp. 283.

An analysis of the free-time reading of nearly three thousand children of 12-15 years.

JEPHCOTT. *Girls Growing Up*. Faber. Pp. 172.

Based largely on the conversation and writing of girls in clubs, this book conveys brilliantly the mental and emotional atmosphere of adolescence.

MANNIN. *Common Sense and the Adolescent*. Jarrolds. Pp. 288.

A challenging but sane study of adolescence and its problems, with particularly valuable sections on sex. Useful for parents and youth leaders.

\*MEAD. *Coming of Age in Samoa*. Penguin Books. Pp. 185.

A study of the life of about fifty adolescent girls in a primitive society with rather unusual sexual customs. The latter part of the book is an interesting consideration of Western educational methods in the light of this study.

\*MENZIES. *Autoerotic Phenomena in Adolescence*. Lewis. Pp. 100.

A valuable study of masturbation, which should be read by all who have to do with youths.

READ. *The Struggles of Male Adolescence*. Allen and Unwin. Pp. 247.

A balanced account of the physical and emotional difficulties of puberty, written in non-technical language, and yet scientific in its treatment.

\*SCHWAB AND VEEDER. *The Adolescent : his Conflicts and Escapes*. Appleton-Century. Pp. 365.

A simple but thorough account of adolescence, covering its physiology, psychology and social and educational interests, and



## Sex Education

stressing the importance of environment for healthy development. Particularly valuable for youth leaders.

TAYLOR. *Do Adolescents Need Parents?* Appleton-Century. Pp. 380. (Published for the Progressive Education Association.)

A study of the ways in which modern conditions require a change of relationship between adolescents and their parents. Should be read especially by parents and youth leaders.

ZACHRY. *Emotion and Conduct in Adolescence.* Appleton-Century. Pp. 563. (Published for the Progressive Education Association.)

Deals with the physiological, emotional, social and ethical changes of adolescence, indicating their relevance for sex education.

### 8. THE ADULT

BROWNING. *Health in Middle Life.* Rich and Cowan. Pp. 249. Contains a useful discussion on the sexual problems of men and women in middle age.

DAVIS. *Factors in the Sex Life of Twenty-Two Hundred Women.* Harper. Pp. 430.

A detailed study of the sex life of women, both single and married. Contains much valuable statistical material relating to marriage relations, autoerotism, homosexuality, frequency of sexual desire, etc. A book for the specialist.

DICKINSON AND BEAM. *The Single Woman.* Williams and Norgate. Pp. 469.

A detailed study of the sex life of over a thousand single women, dealing with virginity, heterosexuality, homosexuality, auto-sexuality, etc. Contains many case histories and several useful statistical tables. A book for the specialist.

DICKINSON AND BEAM. *A Thousand Marriages.* Williams and Norgate. Pp. 482.

A detailed study of over a thousand married women, dealing with all aspects of their sexual life. A book for the specialist.

ELLIS. *Man and Woman.* Heinemann. Pp. 469.

A study of the secondary sexual characters, physical and emotional.

HUTTON. *The Hygiene of the Change in Women.* Heinemann. Pp. 110.

An explanation of the menopause, with suggestions for coping with its difficulties.

\*HUTTON. *The Single Woman and her Emotional Problems.* Baillière, Tyndall and Cox. Pp. 173.

An intelligent and sensitive study.



## Guide to Further Reading

- KISCH. *The Sexual Life of Women*. Heinemann. Pp. 667.  
A standard physiological work, dealing with the sexual life of women at different ages. Useful for reference.
- MEAGHER. *A Study of Masturbation and the Psycho-sexual Life*. Baillière, Tindall and Cox. Pp. 149.  
A serious, but simply written study.
- STOPES. *Change of Life in Men and Women*. Putnam. Pp. 282.  
A valuable book if read critically.
- TAYLOR. *A Critique of Sublimation in Males*. Clark University Press. Pp. 115.  
A careful study which should be read by all who are inclined to prescribe sublimation as a panacea for sexual difficulties.
- TERMAN AND MILES. *Sex and Personality*. McGraw-Hill. Pp. 600.  
A study by modern psychological technique, of the temperamental characteristics of 'maleness' and 'femaleness'.
- \*WILE (Editor). *The Sex Life of the Unmarried Adult*. Allen and Unwin. Pp. 320.  
A symposium of essays dealing with various aspects of the subject.

### 9. FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNGER ADOLESCENTS

- \*BIBBY. *An Experimental Human Biology*. Heinemann. Pp. 99.  
A text-book for pupils of 11-14 years, providing material for a year's course in human physiology and including sex and reproduction in their appropriate places.
- \*BIBBY. *How Life is Handed On*. Nelson. Pp. 96.  
A description of reproduction (mainly in animals) suitable for children of about 10 years upwards. Includes accounts of courtship, family life, etc. Liberally illustrated.
- \*DE SCHWEINITZ. *How a Baby is Born*. Routledge. Pp. 79.  
A delightful little book, suitable for children of about 8-11 years.
- GARNER. *The Farmer's Animals*. Cambridge University Press. Pp. 99.  
A reader for children of 13-15 years, including simple matter-of-fact descriptions of reproduction in sheep, cow, pig, horse, etc.
- GILBERT. *Biography of the Unborn*. Murray. Pp. 132.  
A simply written and well-illustrated account of the development of the human embryo.
- \*LEVINE AND SELIGMAN. *The Wonder of Life*. Routledge. Pp. 116.



## Sex Education

A brilliant explanation of sex and reproduction, suitable for the child of 11-15 years, and worth reading by the adult too.

POUT AND TUCKER. *Growing and Growing Up*. Alliance of Honour. Pp. 54.

A booklet about sex for girls of about 8-11 years.

STRAIN. *Being Born*. Appleton-Century. Pp. 144.

A simply written and well-illustrated account of sex and reproduction suitable for children of about 8-11 years. Includes reference to other animals, but does not burk the issue in humans.

TUCKER AND POUT. *How You Grow*. Alliance of Honour. Pp. 54.

A booklet about sex for boys of about 8-11 years.

WILLIAMS ELLIS. *How You are Made*. Black. Pp. 96.

A simply written outline of human physiology, for children of about 7-11 years.

WILLIAMS ELLIS. *How You Began*. Howe. Pp. 96.

A delightful little book for children of about 7-11 years, describing how a baby develops before birth. Unfortunately it largely burks the essential point — that of sexual intercourse.

### 10. FOR OLDER ADOLESCENTS AND YOUNG ADULTS

\*BARNES AND BARNES. *Sex, Friendship and Marriage*. Allen and Unwin. Pp. 205.

A simple discussion of the problems of friendship, courtship, marriage and child rearing, with an outline of the physiology of sex.

BOWMAN. *Marriage for Moderns*. McGraw-Hill. Pp. 493.

An attractively written book based on courses of lectures and discussions on marriage preparation at an American college. Discusses petting, courtship, marriage, careers and leisure activities, family planning, divorce, etc.

CARPENTER. *Love's Coming of Age*. Allen and Unwin. Pp. 221.

A set of sensitive essays on various aspects of sex and in particular of the relations between the sexes. Although somewhat old-fashioned and scientifically unsound in parts, it provides very useful reading for young people.

ELLIS. *Little Essays of Love and Virtue*. Black. Pp. 187.

It is unfortunate that the somewhat saccharine title of this book puts off many potential readers. It deals simply and clearly with the questions of marriage, relations between the sexes, the art of love and the mutual responsibilities of the individual and society.



## Guide to Further Reading

\*GROVES. *Sex in Marriage*. Howe. Pp. 251.

An excellent outline, suitable for young people contemplating marriage. Particularly valuable for its chapters on "The Love Art of the Husband" and "The Love Art of the Wife".

HUTTON. *The Hygiene of Marriage*. Heinemann. Pp. 152.

A simple outline suitable for those contemplating marriage.

KELIHER. *Life and Growth*. Appleton-Century. Pp. 245.

(Published for the Progressive Education Association.)

An outline of the growth and development and of the social maturing of the individual. Attractively written and illustrated.

\*STRAIN. *Love on the Threshold*. Appleton-Century. Pp. 349.

A guide to 'social dating, romance and marriage'. Colloquially written, without any undue moralising, it yet manages to treat very sensibly the problems of behaviour which trouble most young people. Although written for America, should be very useful in other countries too.

TUCKER. *Sex Problems and Youth*. Allen and Unwin. Pp. 120.

Written by an experienced sex educationist, this little book is useful reading for adolescents.

WALKER (Editor). *Preparation for Marriage*. Jonathan Cape. Pp. 191.

A useful handbook for those contemplating marriage.

WEATHERHEAD. *The Mastery of Sex*. Student Christian Movement Press. Pp. 192.

An explanation of sex for young people, written from the Christian viewpoint and dealing with courtship, marriage and other problems of behaviour.

\*WRIGHT. *The Sex Factor in Marriage*. Williams and Norgate. Pp. 128.

A simple account of sexual relations, suitable for young people contemplating marriage.

### II. GENERAL AND MISCELLANEOUS

CHESSER. *Five Phases of Love*. Herbert Jenkins. Pp. 252.

A discussion of the problems of love in different phases of development.

\*ELLIS. *The Psychology of Sex*. Heinemann. Pp. 322.

Deals with normal psychology and with sexual aberrations in their social context. Particularly valuable for teachers and youth leaders.

ELLIS. *More Essays of Love and Virtue*. Constable. Pp. 218.

Despite the similarity of title, this book, unlike *Little Essays of Love and Virtue*, is addressed primarily to adults, not to



## Sex Education

adolescents. It contains an interesting chapter on "The Re-valuation of Obscenity".

EXIDEUIL. *The Human Pair in the Work of Thomas Hardy*. Toulmin. Pp. 219.

An interesting study of the sexual relations of the characters in Hardy's novels, tales and poems. Useful for the teacher of English.

FOLSOM (Editor). *Plan for Marriage*. Harper. Pp. 305.

A symposium of essays on various aspects of marriage — physiological, emotional, cultural, religious, economic, etc. Although a serious study, by no means difficult reading.

GALLOWAY. *Sex and Social Health*. American Social Hygiene Association. Pp. 361.

Although published two decades ago, this is still a valuable book, covering virtually the whole field of sex education, and making many useful suggestions.

\*GRIFFITH. *Sex in Everyday Life*. Allen and Unwin. Pp. 379.

Deals with sexual physiology, psychology, ethics, social considerations, sex education, etc.; with 18 appendices collecting factual material on a wide range of topics.

HAIRE (Editor). *Encyclopaedia of Sexual Knowledge*. Aldor. 2 vols. Pp. 647 and 476.

Contains a good deal of information on most aspects of sex, and provides a useful source of reference.

HERFORD. *Shakespeare's Treatment of Love and Marriage and other Essays*. Allen and Unwin. Pp. 201.

The introductory essay (pp. 43) should be valuable to teachers of English.

LENROW. *Reader's Guide to Prose Fiction*. Appleton-Century. Pp. 371. (Published for the Progressive Education Association.)

An annotated and carefully classified bibliography of 1500 selected novels. Should be invaluable to the teacher of English and all who have the selection of books for school or club libraries.

RICHMOND. *An Introduction to Sex Education*. Farrar and Rinehart. Pp. 312.

A most interesting and comprehensive book, dealing with the biology, physiology and psychology of sex, together with its anthropological, historical and sociological aspects. Its title, however, is rather misleading, since it only just touches on the matter of sex education.

ROSENBLATT. *Literature as Exploration*. Appleton-Century. Pp. 340. (Published for the Progressive Education Association.)



## Guide to Further Reading

Addressed primarily to teachers of literature, this study of the relation between literary appreciation and social understanding should be of value also to all adults concerned with sex education.

\*WALKER. *The Physiology of Sex*. Penguin Books. Pp. 157.

This little book — accurate in matter, original in thought, and attractive in style — covers a wider field than its title suggests, and deals with many of the personal and social problems of sex.

WALKER. *Sex and a Changing Civilisation*. John Lane.

Pp. 135.

Background reading for all interested in sex education. Covers a wide range of topics, from biology to sex worship and ethics.

